THE TREASURER'S REPORT

&

Other Aspects of Community Singing

by

Robert Benchley

C. A. Ward
214 Forest Ave.
New Rochelle, N. Y.

8/
P
817

5/78 Humor 5

THE TREASURER'S REPORT

And Other Aspects of Community Singing

THE TWO OF US SAT ALL ALONE IN A PUBLIC SQUARE . . . DRINKING A LEMON SQUASH TOGETHER.

THE TREASURER'S REPORT

And Other Aspects of

COMMUNITY SINGING

by

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Drawings by Gluyas Williams

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON 1930

THE TREASURER'S REPORT
And Other Aspects of Community Singing
Copyright, 1930, by Robert C. Benchley
Printed in the U. S. A.
FIRST EDITION I-E

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author intends shortly to ask the editors of *The New Yorker*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *D. A. C. News*, *The Bookman*, *Life*, the *Seven Seas*, and *Liberty* for permission to reprint in book form these articles which first appeared in their pages.

CONTENTS

I. Seeing-off 1

II. The People Who Had the House Before 10

III. The Stranger within Our Gates 18

IV. Cleaning Out the Desk 27

V. Carnival Week in Sunny Las Los 37

VI. If These Old Walls Could Talk 47

VII. The Homelike Hotel 53

VIII. Another Uncle Edith Christmas Story 65

IX. One-Two-Three-Four! 75

X. Congenial Souls Wanted 86

XI. The Sunday Menace 90
XII. Ask Me a Question 102
XIII. New Plays for Old 113
XIV. The King's English: Not Murder but Suicide 118
XV. Community Singing 129
XVI. Exercise for Those at Sea 140
XVII. Law-Breaking at Its Source 149
XVIII. French News 157
XIX. Eight o'Clock Sharp 166
XX. Football Rules or Whatever They Are 174
XXI. "Go Down, Sweet Jordan" 183
XXII. "One Minute, Please!" 191
XXIII. The Mystery of the Parley 202
XXIV. What to Read at Sea—if Anything 212
XXV. Penguin Psychology 220
XXVI. Now That You're Tanned—What? 232
XXVII. Sporting Life in America: Dozing 240
XXVIII. The Mystery of Bridge Building 252
XXIX. The Bathroom Revolution 264
XXX. "They're Off!" 277

XXXI. "What Shall We Say?" 288
XXXII. Bringing Back the Morris Dance 295
XXXIII. One Set of French Dishes 304
XXXIV. A Dark Horse in British Sports 313
XXXV. A Vanishing Art 323
XXXVI. The Treasurer's Report 334

THE TREASURER'S REPORT

SEEING-OFF

I AM sailing for Europe shortly and I would like to take this way of announcing to my hundreds, nay dozens, of friends that I can do without a farewell party on sailing-night. The week before—O. K. But not on the night of sailing. I simply have *got* to sail this time.

In the first place, I am on the wagon and would just be a death's head at the feast. But it has been my experience that, drinking or not, the person who is departing, and in whose honor the ice-cream and cookies are being served, is likely to be something of a death's head anyway. He has too much on his mind.

There is the packing to be thought of. If he is any kind of person at all he has left his packing until that night. This more or less begins to prey on his mind along about nine o'clock. There is no sense in being an old

woman about getting packed ahead of time, but if the ship sails at midnight, at least he ought to begin getting his bags out of the hall-closet by nine and lining them up on the floor. The thought that he hasn't done even this, while it doesn't actually drive him from the party, prevents his entering whole-heartedly into the party spirit. Somewhere in the back of his brain is that little imp who keeps tap-tap-tapping and saying, "Come, come, lazy-bones! You don't even know whether your bags are *in* the hall-closet or not." And this sort of thing puts a damper on fun-making. Even if the guest-of-honor has been drinking fulsome toasts to himself all evening, they have no effect on him other than to impede digestion. And if, as I shall be, he is on the wagon, then a more miserable man could not be found in all the countryside 'round.

But above all things he must not tell his friends that he is not yet packed. This news would at once start a huzza and a frenzied dash on the part of all present to "help good

GW

old Bob pack!" "Everybody up to Bobby's and get him packed!" This is fatal. I once sailed, after being assisted by willing hands, with a suitcase entirely filled with telephone-directories (Westchester and Long Island, with a Brooklyn and Queens tucked in to keep the others from rattling about) and a hatbox containing damp sand in which various species of crustaceans were thriving. Dear, *dear* friends! How I shall miss them this year! That is, if I have anything to say about it.

These farewell parties, although they are conceived in what is ostensibly a spirit of friendliness toward the traveler, usually develop a subtle antagonism toward him as the evening wears on. Instead of being the hero of the occasion he gradually becomes the patsy and everything possible is done to confuse and chagrin him. He tries to enter into the spirit of the thing, but the gesture is a weak one, and easy-going as he may be, the thought of the ride, possibly to Hoboken, which lies ahead of him, to say nothing of

the little odds and ends which still remain to be done (such as getting his passport photographs taken) makes his *esprit* a rather ghastly mockery. Along about ten he looks at his watch more frequently, a tactical error which brings down a storm of ridicule from his friends.

"Oh, *you*'ve got time enough!" they scream. "Don't you worry! *We*'ll get you on the ship all right, if we have to buy it and hold it for you—won't we, boys?" And a collection is started to buy the ship and hold it until the next morning.

At about ten-thirty the victim of the entertainment, his mind as clear as a bell, realizes that he has not only to go home and pack and drive to the pier (the ship I am planning to take sails from just off Fort Hamilton, from which the light on Bishop's Rock, England, can be seen on a clear night) but that he also has to manage a good-natured crowd of merry-makers, many of whom have already started to kiss him good-bye. It is a fairly staggering prospect.

Even if he does succeed in breaking away and getting his bags packed (a supposition too silly even to consider) he has to look forward to the horror of getting on board accompanied by his little playmates. After all, he has got to stay on the ship for six days and would like to be on at least easy enough terms with the rest of the passengers so that they would not draw their feet up onto their deck-chairs as he walks past. But, as his well-wishers swarm over the sides of the ship, bowling old gentlemen over and violating the privacy of cabins adjacent to his, he realizes that the best thing for him to do will be to keep to his berth for the first three days and have his meals brought in. Otherwise he will be pointed out among the ship's company as "that man."

There is no place where unseemly behavior shows up more vividly than in the crowd who have come down to see a ship off. Hundreds of people milling about, some crying softly in little groups, others crying loudly at stateroom doors, families breaking up, lovers say-

ing good-bye, mothers bidding farewell to daughters, emotional French ladies in black, sobbing subjunctives on the shoulders of what seem to be stewardesses—and into this

gathering of breaking hearts barges our hero, borne on the shoulders of his light-hearted well-wishers singing "Hinky-dinky-parlay-voo!" He tries to act as if he were not with them, but they will have none of it. Down to his cabin they go with him, pushing open

stateroom doors as they go past, speaking to people they do not know, turning on the taps in his washstand, snapping the lights on and off and all piling into his bunk as a final evidence of *bonhomie*. The whole thing is very unfortunate.

He is lucky if he gets them all out of his room before the ship sails. Several may have to go off with the pilot. There is something terrifying about the unanimity with which all seeing-off parties decide to stay right there in the room and "sail with good old Benny." "We could get clothes from the steward," they say, "or even wear our evening-clothes all the way over." Considering the number of times this whimsical suggestion has been made, it gets a surprisingly big laugh at each offering. And, for a time, it looks as if they really meant to go through with it. Stewards come and plead in vain for them to go ashore. Horns blow, whistles moan, gongs bang, but all to no effect. "We've got plenty of time yet," seems to be the consensus of opinion. "They always blow those things an hour be-

fore they really sail." And there is another song and another toast drunk out of soap-dishes and another suggestion that they sail with good old Benny and wear their evening-clothes all the way across. The best way for the departing member to handle them is to say that he has decided not to sail after all, get off the boat and lure them with him. Then he can suddenly turn and run back after getting half way down the pier and, if he is lucky, be pulled in with the gangplank.

And that is why, my good friends, I would rather stumble, a solitary, sobbing figure, on board my ship when it sails, with no cheering words of good-bye, no hearty handclasps of friendship, no memory of affectionate toasts ringing in my ears. It is better so. I am a lonely man, and lonely will I put out to sea.

THE PEOPLE WHO HAD THE HOUSE BEFORE

[STRANGE ADVENTURES OF THE NEXT TENANTS IN THE FAMOUS TWO-FAMILY HOUSE AT 21 MASSASOIT STREET, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS]

OCTOBER 1, 1930—Moved in today. Everything looks all right, clean, etc. The people who had the house before us were evidently good housekeepers. They *did* take away all the electric-light bulbs and base-plugs, but they probably paid for them themselves and so were within their rights. They might have left us the patent faucets on the bathtub, though. We can't fill the tub without dishing water over from the washbowl.

One thing they did leave which seems kind of strange. Each room has an insurance calendar hanging in it and on the hall window-

seat there is a pile of data on the New York Life Insurance Company's special twenty-year endowment policy.

October 14—A rather peculiar thing happened today. We were sitting in the living-room when a couple of newspaper reporters with big cameras came up to the door and asked if we would mind sitting out on the porch and having our pictures taken. I said that I would have to put on my collar first, but the man said that it would make a better picture without it. More democratic, he said. He even said if I had those overalls handy to put them on. I said "What overalls?" and he just winked.

When we got out on the porch into the light, the photographers seemed a little surprised and sort of disappointed and talked together in a low tone. Then one of them said: "Who lives in the other side of the house?" I said that I didn't know as we had just come to town ourselves from the West, but I thought their name was Walters. "You just moved in yourselves?" he asked, looking

rather suspicious. "Weren't you ever President of the United States?" I laughed and said not that I knew of, but that a few years ago there was a week when I was on the Shriners' Convention that I might have been almost anything. "No, it would have had to have been longer than a week," he said. Then he said to the other man: "Pack up your things, Ed. We got the wrong house." And Ed said: "We should have ought to have done this job last spring when we got the assignment."

So they went away and we never got our picture taken.

October 20—This afternoon the telephone rang and Edith answered it and Central said that the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in New York City wanted to speak. So I went, being a great reader myself, and a girl's voice said that she was speaking for Mr. Wong or Long and that my copy for the January number was due. I said that I hadn't got my copy of the November number yet, and she said, "Not

the copy *of*, but the copy *for*, the January number." So I hung up.

OCTOBER 21—We ran across something in the attic today which may explain something about the *Cosmopolitan* episode—but not much. Up behind one of the posts where we were putting our trunks Edith found a lot of yellow papers with "Cosmopolitan" typed in the upper left-hand corner of each. The first one had some sort of article begun on it, about a paragraph. It began: "My early life in Plymouth was just about the same sort of life that every God-fearing, healthy boy of that time was leading." The next sheet had much the same sentence as a starter, only a few words longer. In the margin were some figures scribbled, which as near as we could make out were: "$1.00 per word. 23 words. $23." The next sheet had the same sort of sentence only much longer: "I think that I may say without exaggeration that the early days of my boyhood, lived, as they were, amid the green hills of Plymouth, Vermont, were just the sort of days, taken one by one, as

those which go to make up the average day of the typical healthy, God-fearing, honest and thrifty American boy of today in a town the size of Plymouth, Vermont, where Nature has a chance to imbue the growing youth with the principles of steadfast and pious observance of the laws of God and of the United States of America." In the margin beside this were the figures: "96 words @ $1.00. $96.00," and a note: "Ask Long about hyphenated words."

As none of it seemed to make much sense, we threw the whole bunch of papers away.

October 23—Edith swore she saw a man wearing a cowboy suit hanging around the front walk tonight. I told her not to be silly, that there were no cowboys in Northampton.

October 24—This thing is beginning to get on my nerves. This afternoon four Indians in full regalia came up on the porch and rang the bell. Edith answered and the biggest Indian asked for "Big White Chief." Edith told him that our name was Meakins and that maybe he wanted Walters, who lived in the

other half of the house. The big Indian shook his head and said: "Come to pay call on Big White Chief. How-do?" Edith said: "I'm all right, thank you, but nobody here knows any Indians." Then she called to me and said: "Unless you do, George. Do you know any Indians?" I called back and simply said: "No." So Edith got a little cross by this time and said: "And what is more, we don't want any sweet-grass baskets, either, so get along with you, all four of you." This sent the Indians into a conference on the front steps and Edith came into the house and locked the door. We watched them from the bay window until they went away. I don't like the looks of things in this neighborhood.

October 25—Well, things have about reached a climax. I saw the cowboy tonight. He was walking up and down in front of the house about half past ten. I watched him for a little while and saw him go around to the back of the house. I put the lights out and waited. Pretty soon I heard a key in the lock and the cowboy came in the front door walk-

ing very quietly. I snapped on the light and said: "I suppose you're looking for those Indians. Well, they went away yesterday." He seemed a little embarrassed. "Did you find any yellow papers here?" he asked. He talked more like a farmer than a cowboy, through his nose sort of. I said: "Yes, what's it to you?" He said: "They were typewritten only on one side, weren't they?" I said I hadn't looked on both sides. "They belong to me," he said, "and I wanted to use them up on the other side." I told him that he was too late and that we had thrown them away. "And where did you get a key for this house?" I asked him. "I used to live here," he said, and walked out. I called up the police and they said that there was a State Hospital near here and probably one of the inmates was loose, and if I saw him again to let them know right away.

October 26—The Indians came back today, bringing another one with them. We didn't go to the door and watched them from the bay window until they went away. A

small crowd gathered outside and began to cheer. We decided that they were from the State Hospital too, and Edith said she thought we ought to move.

OCTOBER 27—Edith got so nervous last night thinking she heard the cowboy and the Indians again that we put some things into a suitcase and spent the night at the Draper Hotel. Have given up the house and are going to live in Holyoke.

THE STRANGER WITHIN OUR GATES

ONE of the problems of child education which is not generally included in books on the subject is the Visiting Schoolmate. By this is meant the little friend whom your child brings home for the holidays. What is to be done with him, the Law reading as it does?

He is usually brought home because his own home is in Nevada, and if he went 'way out there for Christmas he would no sooner get there than he would have to turn right around and come back—an ideal arrangement on the face of it. But there is something in the idea of a child away from home at Christmas-time that tears at the heart-strings, and little George is received into the bosom of your family with open arms and a slight catch in the throat. Poor little nipper! He must call up his parents by telephone on Christmas Day; they will miss him so. (It later turns out

that even when George's parents lived in Philadelphia he spent his vacations with friends, his parents being no fools.)

For the first day George is a model of politeness. "George is a nice boy," you say to your son; "I wish you knew more like him." "George seems to be a very manly little chap for fourteen," your wife says after the boys have gone to bed. "I hope that Bill is impressed." Bill, as a matter of fact, does seem to have caught some of little George's gentility and reserve, and the hope for his future which had been practically abandoned is revived again under his schoolmate's influence.

The first indication that George's stay is not going to be a blessing comes at the table, when, with confidence born of one day's association, he announces flatly that he does not eat potatoes, lamb or peas, the main course of the meal consisting of potatoes, lamb and peas. "Perhaps you would like an egg, George?" you suggest. "I hate eggs," says George, looking out the window while he

waits for you to hit on something that he does like.

"I'm afraid you aren't going to get much to eat tonight, then, George," you say. "What is there for dessert?"

"A nice bread pudding with raisins," says your wife.

George, at the mention of bread pudding, gives what is known as "the bird," a revolting sound made with the tongue and lower lip. "I can't eat raisins anyway," he adds, to be polite. "They make me come out in a rash."

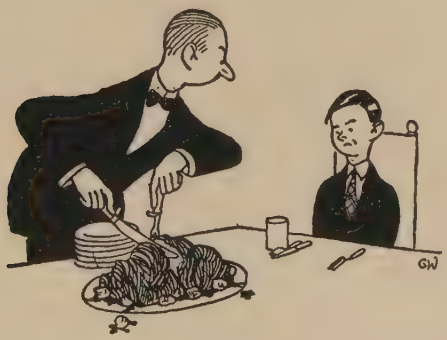
"Ah-h! The old raisin-rash," you say. "Well, we'll keep you away from raisins, I guess. And just what is it that you can eat, George? You can tell me. I am your friend."

Under cross-examination it turns out that George can eat beets if they are cooked just right, a rare species of eggplant grown only in Nevada, and all the ice cream in the world. He will also cram down a bit of cake now and then for manners' sake.

All this would not be so bad if it were not

for the fact that, coincidentally with refusing the lamb, George criticizes your carving of it. "My father carves lamb across the grain instead of the way you do," he says, a little crossly.

"Very interesting," is your comment.



"My father says that only old ladies carve straight down like that," he goes on.

"Well, well," you say pleasantly between your teeth, "That makes me out sort of an old lady, doesn't it?"

"Yes, sir," says George.

"Perhaps you have a different kind of lamb in Nevada," you suggest, hacking off a large

chunk. (You have never carved so badly.) "A kind that feeds on your special kind of eggplant."

"We don't have lamb very often," says George. "Mostly squab and duck."

"You stick to squab and duck, George," you say, "and it will be just dandy for that rash of yours. Here take this and like it!" And you toss him a piece of lamb which, oddly enough, is later found to have disappeared from his plate.

It also turns out later that George's father can build sailboats, make a monoplane that will really fly, repair a broken buzzer and imitate birds, none of which you can do and none of which you have ever tried to do, having given it to be understood that they *couldn't* be done. You begin to hate George's father almost as much as you do George.

"I suppose your father writes articles for the magazines, too, doesn't he, George?" you ask sarcastically.

"Sure," says George with disdain. "He does that Sundays—Sunday afternoons."

This just about cleans up George so far as you are concerned, but there are still ten more days of vacation. And during these ten days

your son Bill is induced by George to experiment with electricity to the extent of blowing out all the fuses in the house and burning the cigarette-lighter out of the sedan; he is

also inspired to call the cook a German spy who broils babies, to insult several of the neighbors' little girls to the point of tears and reprisals, and to refuse spinach. You know that Bill didn't think of these things himself, as he never could have had the imagination.

On Christmas Day all the little presents that you got for George turn out to be things that he already has, only his are better. He incites Bill to revolt over the question of where the tracks to the electric train are to be placed (George maintaining that in his home they run through his father's bathroom, which is the only sensible place for tracks to run). He breaks several of little Barbara's more fragile presents and says that she broke them herself by not knowing how to work them. And the day ends with George running a high temperature and coming down with mumps, necessitating a quarantine and enforced residence in your house for a month.

This is just a brief summary of the Visiting Schoolmate problem. Granted that every

THE PRESENTS TURN OUT TO BE THINGS HE ALREADY HAS, ONLY HIS ARE BETTER.

child should have a home to go to at Christmas, could there not be some sort of state subsidy designed to bring their own homes on to such children as are unable to go home themselves? On such a day each home should be a sanctuary, where only members of the tribe can gather and overeat and quarrel. Outsiders just complicate matters, especially when outsiders cannot be spanked.

CLEANING OUT THE DESK

THE first thing that I have got to do in my campaign to make this bright new year a better one for all of us is to clean out my desk. I started on this a little over a week ago, but, so far, I have got only to the second drawer on the left hand side. I think that people must have been sneaking up during the last three or four years and putting things in my desk drawers while I have been asleep (they couldn't have done it while I was awake, for I have been working here every minute and would most certainly have noticed them at it, that is, unless they were dressed like gnomes. I never pay any attention to gnomes fussing around my desk when I am working. In fact, I rather like it). But somebody has been at work, and hard at work, putting little objects and bits of paper in my desk drawers since the last time I went

through them. And I don't know whether to throw them away or not.

For instance, what would I ever have wanted with an old mitten that I should have tucked it 'way back in that upper left hand drawer? It was right up against the back partition of the drawer, under a program of the six-day bicycle race of February, 1923, and clinging to it, almost a part of it, was half a life-saver (clove flavor). Now, I never wear mittens, and even if I did it certainly wouldn't be a mitten like this. Furthermore, it has no mate. I haven't tried it on, for I would rather not have much to do with it in its present state, but I think it is for the right hand only. As I lift it gingerly out of the drawer (I was at first afraid that it was a small beaver) it seems to have some lumpy object tucked away up in the very tip, but I am not going in to find out what it is. I may have a man come up with a ferret and get the whole thing settled once and for all, but for the present both the mitten and the piece of life-saver are over in the corner of the room where I tossed

them. I almost wish that they were back in the drawer again.

Just in front of the mitten, and a little to the left, I came upon a pile of old check book stubs (1926-'28 inclusive, with February, April, July and August of 1926, and September to December of 1927 missing). On thumbing these over I was fascinated to see how many checks I had made out to "cash" and for what generous amounts. I must have been a pretty prodigal boy in those days. Dear me, dear me! Here is one made out to the Alsatian Novelty Company for $11.50 on Oct. 5, 1926. What traffic was I having with the Alsatian Novelty Company, do you suppose? Whatever it was, it wasn't enough of a novelty to make much impression on me—or on any one else, I guess. Maybe it was that rubber girdle that I sent for when I first began to notice that I was putting on weight. Whatever became of that, I wonder? I know what became of the weight, because it is right there where it was, but the girdle never did much but make me look bulky. Maybe the girdle is

in the bottom drawer which I haven't come to yet.

Now about those old check stubs. I suppose that they might as well be thrown away, but then supposing the Alsatian Novelty Company should come around and say that I never paid the $11.50! I would be in a pretty pickle, wouldn't I? Of course, no jury would acquit me merely on the evidence of a check stub, but I don't know where the cancelled checks are and this would at least show that I was systematic about the thing. Then, too, the income tax people never get around to complaining about your payments until three or four years after they are made, and it might come in handy to be able to write them and say: "On March 15, 1928, according to my records, sent you a check for $45.60. It is up to you to find it." It might frighten them a little, any way. So I guess the best thing to do is to put the stubs right back in the drawer and sit tight. All I hope is that no trouble arises over the checks drawn dur-

ing those months which are lost. I wouldn't have a leg to stand on in that case.

In with the pile of check stubs I found a pamphlet entitled, "The Control of the Root Knot," issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in 1923. Now "root knot" is a thing that I never have had much trouble with (knock wood) and why I should have been saving a pamphlet on its control for seven years is something that not only mystifies, but irritates me a little. I read some of it and even then I didn't see why.

However, in 1923 I evidently thought that it might come in handy some day, and if I throw it away now it would be just my luck to come down with root knot next week and need it very badly. It is possible, of course, that I never had any hand in sending for the pamphlet at all and that it has been put in my desk by those mysterious agencies which I suspected at first (gnomes, or people representing themselves to be gnomes), in which case I am just making a fool of myself by hoarding it for another seven years. I guess

that I will put it aside and read it thoroughly some day before throwing it away. Maybe my name is mentioned in it somewhere.

One article, however, which I recognized almost immediately is an old German pipe,

one of those with a long, hooked stem and a bowl covered with straw. I think that I bought that myself; at any rate I remember trying to smoke it once or twice. But as soon as I got the tobacco into it and the fire started so that it would draw, it went out. This, I

figured, was owing to my shutting the lid down over the bowl. The lid was evidently meant to be shut down, as there was a hinge on it (now fortunately broken so that it hangs loosely to one side), but I guess that I didn't quite have the knack of the thing. I remember thinking that sometime I might want to dress up in German costume for a lark or something, and then if I saved the pipe all I would have to get would be the German costume. So I saved it, and, as luck would have it, have never been called upon to dress up. There is still some of the original tobacco in it—some is in it and some is in the drawer—and I got a little sentimental over the memories of the old days in Munich where I bought it. (I was in Munich for three hours, between trains.) I even tried to smoke a little of it without clamping down the lid, but either the tobacco wasn't very good or my stomach isn't what it used to be, for I didn't go through with the scheme. "Wer nicht die Sehnsucht kennt ——" and whatever the rest of the quotation is.

All of this, you will see, took up quite a lot of time. It is necessary that I get the desk cleaned out if I am ever going to start fresh now, but, with the first two drawers giving up such a wealth of sentimental memorabilia, I must evidently give over several days to it. There is, for instance, the letter from my insurance company, dated June 15, 1928, saying that as I have allowed policy No. 4756340 to lapse it will be necessary for me to take another physical examination before I can be reinstated. Now the question arises: Did I ever take the examination, and am I reinstated? I remember taking an examination, but I think it was for the war. I certainly don't think that I have had my shirt off before a doctor since 1928 and I am afraid that if I call them up about it to find out they will make me do it right away, and that would be too bad because I wouldn't get anywhere near such a good mark now as I would have when the policy first lapsed. I might even have to do a lot of homework in order to catch up with my class. I think what I will do is set

about right now getting into condition again and then call them up. I don't see how that letter ever got so far back in the drawer.

There is one thing, however, that I shall never be short of again, and that is matches, I have never seen so many matches in one place as there were in my desk drawer. Here I have sat day after day, unable to work because I was out of matches with which to light my pipe, and all the time there were enough matches right under my nose (if I had put my nose in the upper left hand drawer) to do parlor tricks with for 10 years. They are all in those little paper covers, some containing five matches, some none, but, added together, a magnificent hoard. I don't right now see the advantage of saving empty match covers, but I suppose I had some good reason at the time. Perhaps I liked the pictures on them. There are some with pictures of hotels on them which I have never visited in my life (Atlantic City has a marvellous representation) and I am afraid that I would have a difficult time denying that I had ever

been to the Five Devils Inn in Tia Juana with such damning evidence as two match covers bearing its advertisement staring the examiners in the face. But honestly, I haven't. However, there are seven matches left in one and one match in the other; so I am going to save them anyway. And what a lot of fun I am going to have with my new found treasure! It might even be the means of my becoming a pyromaniac.

But there! I mustn't think of such things now. All I have to do is get those other four drawers cleaned out and the papers which are on the back of my desk sorted out (I am a little nervous about tackling those papers, as I have heard a strange rustling in there lately and there might be field mice) and I shall be all spick and span and ready for the new year. All I hope is that the other drawers don't take as long as the first two have, or it will be 1931, and then I would have to wait until 1940 for another good, even year to start fresh.

CARNIVAL WEEK IN SUNNY LAS LOS

You have all doubtless wanted to know, at one time or another, a few of the quaint customs which residents of the continent of Europe seem to feel called upon to perpetuate from one century to another. You may know about a few of them already, such as child-bearing (which has been taken up on this continent to such an alarming extent) and others of the more common variety of folk mannerisms, but I am very proud and happy to be able to tell you today of some of the less generally known customs of the inhabitants of that medieval Spanish province Las Los (or Los Las, as it was formerly called, either way meaning "The The" *pl.*) where I have had the extremely bad fortune to be spending the summer.

Las Los, nestling, as it does, in the intercostal nooks of the Pyrenees, makes up into

one of the nicest little plague-spots on the continent of Europe. Europe has often claimed that Las Los was *not* a part of it, and in 1356 Spain began a long and costly war with France, the loser to take Los Las and two outfielders. France won and Spain built an extension onto the Pyrenees in which to hide Los Las. They succeeded in hiding it from view, but there was one thing about Los Las that they forgot; so you always know that it is there.

It was in this little out-of-the-way corner of the world, then, that I set up my easel and began painting my fingers and wrists. I soon made friends with the natives (all of whom were named Pedro) and it was not long before they were bringing me their best Sunday knives and sticking them in my back for me to try and tell which was which. And such laughter would go up when I guessed the wrong one! All Latins, after all, are just children at heart.

But I am not here to tell you of the many merry days I myself spent in Las Los, but of

some of the native customs which I was privileged to see, and, once in a while, take part in. They rather resent an outsider taking part in most of them, however, for there is an old saying in Las Los that "when an outsider takes part, rain will surely dart" (meaning "dart" from the clouds, you see) and above all things rain is abhorred in that section of the country, as rain has a tendency to cleanse whatever it touches, and, as another old proverb has it, "clean things, dead things"—which isn't exactly accurate, but appeals to these simple, childish people, to whom cleanliness is next to a broken hip.

First of all, then, let us tiptoe up on the natives of Las Los during their carnival time. The carnival week comes during the last week in July, just when it is hottest. This makes it really ideal for the Los Lasians, for extreme heat, added to everything else, renders their charming little town practically unbearable. This week was chosen many hundreds of years ago and is supposed to mark the anniversary of the marriage of old Don

Pedro's daughter to a thunderbolt, a union which was so unsatisfactory to the young lady that she left her husband in two days and married a boy named Carlos, who sold tortillas. This so enraged the thunderbolt that he swore never to come to Los Las again, and, from that day to this (so the saying goes, I know not whether it be true or not) that region has never had any locusts. (This would almost make it seem that the repulsed bridegroom had been a locust, but the natives, on being questioned, explain that the *patois* for "thunderbolt" [*enjuejoz*] is very much like the *patois* for "locust" [*enjuejoz*] and that the thunder god, in giving his order for the future of Los Las, put the accent on the wrong syllable and cut them off from locusts instead of thunder storms). This may, or may not, be the truth, but, as I said to the old man who told me "Who the hell cares?"

The first day of the Carnival of the Absence of Locusts (just why they should be so cocky about having no locusts is not clear. Locusts would be a god-send compared to

some of the things they *have* got) is spent in bed, storing up strength for the festival. On this day all the shops, except those selling wine, are closed. This means that a little shop down by the river which sells sieves is closed. People lie in bed and send out to the wine-shops for the native drink, which is known as *wheero*. All that is necessary to do with this drink is to place it in an open saucer on the window sill and inhale deeply from across the room. In about eight seconds the top of the inhaler's head rises slowly and in a dignified manner until it reaches the ceiling where it floats, bumping gently up and down. The teeth then drop out and arrange themselves on the floor to spell "Portage High School, 1930," the eyes roll upward and backward, and a strange odor of burning rubber fills the room. This is followed by an unaccountable feeling of intense lassitude.

Thus we may expect nothing from the natives for the first two days of the carnival, for the second day is spent in looking for bits of head and teeth, and in general moan-

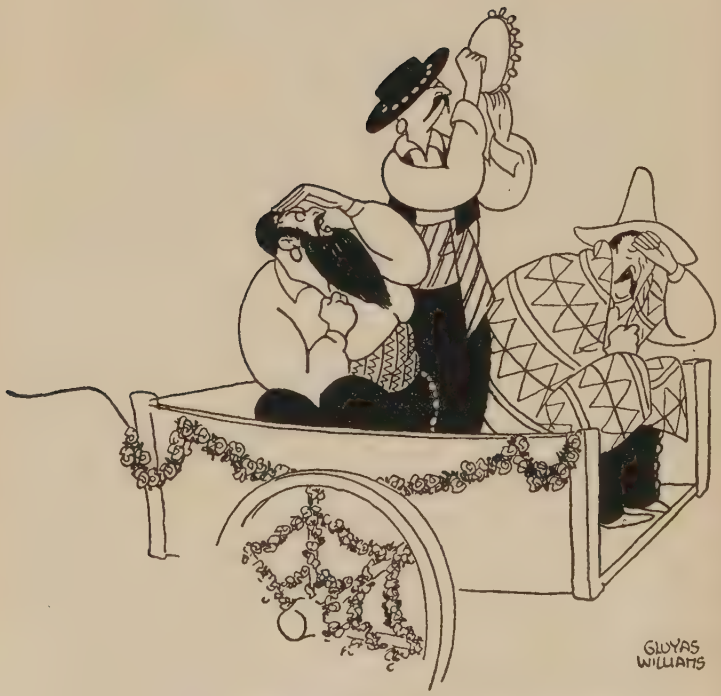
ing. (A sorry carnival, you will say—and *I* will say, too.) But later on, things will brighten up.

On the third day the inhabitants emerge, walking very carefully in order not to jar off their ears, and get into a lot of decorated ox carts. They are not very crazy about getting into these ox carts, but it is more or less expected of them at carnival time. Pictures are taken of them riding about and are sent to the London illustrated papers, and if they were to pass up one year without riding in decorated ox carts, it wouldn't seem like carnival week to the readers of the London illustrated papers. You can hardly blame a man with a *wheero* hangover, however, for not wanting to bump around over cobblestones in an old two-wheeled cart, even if it has got paper flowers strung all over it. One of the saddest sights in the world is to see a native, all dressed up in red and yellow, with a garland of orange roses around his neck, jolting and jouncing along over hard stone bumps with a girl on his knee, and trying to

simulate that famous Spanish smile and gay abandon, all the time feeling that one more bump and away goes that meal he ate several days ago, along with his legs and arms and portions of his lower jaw. No wonder Spaniards look worried.

However, there is a great deal of shouting and cawing among those who can open their mouths, and occasionally someone hits a tambourine. This is usually frowned upon by the person standing next to the tambourine-hitter and a remark, in Spanish, is made which could roughly be translated as: "For the love of God, shut up that incessant banging!"

The carnival, which is known as *Romeria*, is supposed to be a festival of the picnic type combined with a religious pilgrimage to some sort of shrine. This shrine, however, is never reached, as along about noon of the third day some desperate guy, with a hang-over no longer to be borne, evolves a cure on the "hair of the dog that bit you" theory, and the *wheero* is brought out again. The village



FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, SHUT UP THAT INCESSANT BANGING!

watering trough is filled with it and a sort of native dance is held around the trough, everyone inhaling deeply. Those who are still unable to inhale are carried to the edge of the trough and a little *wheero* is rubbed on their upper-lips, just under the nose. Then it is "good-night all, and a merry, merry trip to Blanket Bay," for the festive villagers, and the carnival is shot to hell. A week later business is quietly resumed.

On the fifth day of the carnival there is supposed to be a bull chase through the streets. The principle of the thing is that a bull is let loose and everyone chases it, or vice versa. As, however, there was nobody fit to chase a butterfly, much less a bull, on the fifth day of this carnival, I had to take care of the bull myself. The two of us sat all alone in the public square among the cadavers drinking a sort of lemon squash together.

"A dash of *wheero*?" I asked the bull.

Well, you should have heard him laugh! After that, I got up on his back and rode all

around the town, visiting the points of interest and climbing several of the better looking mountains. Pretty soon we were in Turkey, where we saw many interesting sights and then, swinging around through the Balkans, I got back just in time for me to scramble into bed. I must have hit my head on the footboard while pulling up the sheet, for the next morning (or whenever it was) when I awoke, I had quite a bad headache. Thank heaven I knew enough to lay off that *wheero*, however. I'm no fool.

IF THESE OLD WALLS COULD TALK!

In passing by the old Waldorf the other day (or, to be exact, just as they were beginning to tear it down) I realized, with a slight catch in my throat, that some of the dullest hours of my life had been spent within its crumbling walls and, as I stopped to look for the last time at its historic front, I would have murmured *"Eheu fugaces!"* if I had been sure whether the "g" is pronounced hard or soft.

The Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf! What a flood of tiresome memories come tumbling to mind at the thought of that long speakers' table and the deadly hooey that had been delivered across its parapet! For six solid months, as a reporter for the daily press, I was forced nightly to attend banquets there, writhing with my colleagues at the little table down at the left; sleeping sometimes with my little head pillowed in my arms, some-

times supported by a numbing elbow, but always restless and uneasy and deriving none of that refreshing repair which sleep is supposed to bring. For always in my ear there was the steady, rhythmic drone of the speakers saying: "I do not want to take up more of your time, but there *is* one more point which I would like to make, and that is this ——"

If only those old walls could talk, how boring they would be! No walls can take the beating that those walls took, decade after decade, without absorbing some of the deadly words and ponderous phrases with which the air was saturated and giving off something of the ennui which settled like a pall over that room at nine-thirty every night for years. Probably no walls of their age would have as little that was worth while to repeat.

Come, let us all turn into pumpkins and roll upstairs again into that old ballroom and see what ghosts are there! All right, then, let's not!

But if we *were* to visit the place again some

night at midnight, just before the wreckers let the last of the royal boxes crash to the place where the floor used to be, I am sure that we would see a sight which would repay us for our trouble—and a hell of a lot of trouble it would be, too, climbing up stairs which aren't there any more.

For there, at the end of the long room, in the eerie half-light, we would see the speakers' table, with its mounds of carnations and plates of melting ice-cream studded with cigar-ends, and rising above it, behind badly bent shirt-fronts, would be the row of guests, each running over in his mind the torture he is about to inflict on his audience and each making believe listen to the one who happens to have the floor at the time.

And who is that youth, sitting over at the table in the corner, along with other youths of the same ilk and informal dress, drawing little pictures on his menu and now and again muttering under his breath, "Aw, nuts!"? It is the ghost of the Boy I Used to Be, the boy whose fresh young soul was seared and cal-

loused with a premature cynicism, whose eyes were even then narrowing with bitter distrust of mankind, because night after night he was forced to listen to the great minds of the nation giving expression to palpable bologna just in order that his section of the metropolitan press might go roaring to print with all the horrid details for the next morning's breakfast-tables. (As a matter of fact, out of perhaps two hundred banquets covered, my paper used not more than three stories of mine and only a couple of sticks of those.)

And what are these ghost words which come floating out from nowhere, rustling through the empty shell of the great room? Listen carefully and you will hear them.

". . . and, just so long as this great nation, supreme in its devotion to the ideals of that Liberty established by our fathers . . . with annual imports for the year 1915 running into tens of millions of dollars . . . founded on the principle, based on the idea, conceived in the theory that no organization, no institution, no body of men can . . . now,

gentlemen, I feel in a way like that Irishman in being here with you tonight, because . . . over against this is, as I see it, America's debt to France, a debt which can never . . . this does not include that work done by outside organizations which have handled the thing very ably in their own way . . . leaving six billions of dollars which this country . . . get hung, nigger, get hung . . . I have only a few more minutes at my disposal, your chairman having warned me before I began that . . . the Class of 1918 has already raised more than its quota and I am sure that each and every one of you here tonight . . . and I want to tell you tonight of a case which Dr. Gilley brought to my attention . . . it has been said that the teacher of Martin Luther always stood before his pupils . . . a little boy in the back of the room raised his hand . . . into sixteen millions of dollars annually . . . just as surely as if he had died in the trenches . . . glowing with American ideals, fortified with new concepts of character, trained as children never have been trained

in all the long history of the Near East . . . making a total of three hundreds of millions of dollars . . . I thank you."

And, as we listen to these words, echoes of a few of the hundreds of thousands of speeches which have reverberated through the old Waldorf ballroom, let us tip-toe quietly away, as so many auditors have done in the past, and, getting our hat and coat from the ghost of a check-room boy, leave the scene to those memories which have made it. But, as we go, perhaps it will be possible for us to give the last remaining wall a push so that it will fall in the direction of the speakers' table.

THE HOMELIKE HOTEL

ONE of the chief factors in the impending crash of the American Home as an institution is the present craze for making so many other places "homelike." We have homelike hotels, homelike barber shops, homelike auditoriums, and, so they tell me, homelike jails. A man can't go into a shop to get his skates sharpened without being made to feel that, if he has any appreciation for atmosphere at all, he ought really to send for his trunks and settle down and live right there in the skate sharpening place. It is getting so that a home-loving man doesn't know which way to turn.

The hotels were the leaders in this campaign to make the home seem unhomelike by comparison. There was a time when a hotel was simply a place in which you slept; that is, if you were a good sleeper. You went in and registered and the man who pushed the

book out at you turned his collar around and became the boy who took your bag up (possibly in one of those new-fangled lifts which you were sure would never replace the horse —at least, not in your affections).

The room, as you entered it, seemed to be a species of closet, smelling strongly of straw matting and rug threads, and, after a good look at the cherry bureau and its duplicating mirror and a tug at the rope which was coiled by the window in case you wanted to lasso any one, you turned out the hanging bulb over the bed (making a barely perceptible difference in the lighting of the room), and went out into the street to find a place to sit until bedtime. You would no more have thought of sitting in your room than you would have thought of getting into one of the bureau drawers and lolling around with a good book.

The first sign that the hotels were going in for the homey stuff in a big way was when they began hanging pictures on the walls. Either they didn't get the right pictures or

they weren't hung properly. At any rate, the first hotel wall pictures were not successful in giving a homelike atmosphere. There were usually pastels showing two ladies with a fan, or two fans and one lady, with a man in knee breeches hovering about in the background. The girl with the broken jug was also a great favorite in the early days of hotel decoration. She still is doing very well, as a matter of fact, and you will find her in even the most up-to-date hostelries, giving what is hoped will be a final touch of bonhomie to the room. Well, she doesn't, and the sooner hotel managements are brought to realize it, the better it will be for them.

In fact, the whole problem of what pictures to hang on the walls of a hotel room is still in a state of flux. Until they get away from those little French garden scenes, with fans and sun dials as the chief props, they are never going to make me feel at home. And they do not help matters any by introducing etchings showing three boats lying alongside a dock or 17 geese flying South. It seems to

me that the picture hangers in hotels are striving too hard for good taste. What we want is not good taste in our hotel pictures, but something to look at. If you are going to live in the room with a picture all the rest of your life, good taste is all right. But for overnight give me something a little daring, with a lot of red in it.

There is another development in the equipment of hotel rooms which, while it does not exactly make the quarters attractive, keeps the guest interested while he is in the room. I refer to the quantity of reading matter which is placed at his disposal. This does not mean the little magazines that some hotels place by the bedside, in the hope that you will sit up so late reading that you will have to send down for a glass of milk and some crackers at midnight. I don't think people read those as much as they are supposed to. I don't think they even look at the pictures as much as they are supposed to.

But there is a trait which is almost universal among hotel guests and which is being

catered to more and more by the managements. It is the tendency, amounting almost to a fascination, to read every word of every sign which is displayed around the room. You know very well that the chances are that not one sign out of ten will have any bearing on you or your life in that room. And yet, almost as soon as the bellboy has left, you amble around the room, reading little notices which have been slipped under the glass bureau top, tacked to the door, or tucked in the mirror. Not only do you read them once, but usually go over them a second time, hoping that maybe there is something of interest which eluded you in the first reading.

I had occasion last week to share a hotel room with a man who was at Atlantic City with me on business. We were shown up by the boy, who went through all the regulation manoeuvres of opening the window (which has to be shut immediately after he has gone), putting the bags on the stool (from which they have to be removed for unpacking), pushing open the door to the bathroom

WE SPENT THE REST OF THE AFTERNOON READING SIGNS TO OUR HEARTS' CONTENT.

to show you where it is and to prevent your going into the next room by mistake, and making such financial adjustments as may be necessary. This completed, I reminded George that we were already late for our first appointment, and started for the door to go downstairs.

George, however, was busy at something over by the bureau. "Just a minute," he said, in a preoccupied tone. He was bending over the glass top as if he had found a deposit of something that might possibly turn out to be gold.

Impatiently I went over to grab him by the arm and pull him along. I saw he was reading a little notice, printed in red, which had been tucked under the glass. Determined to see what this fascinating message was that had riveted George to the spot, I read:

The use of alcohol lamps, sterno lamps, and all other flame-producing appliances, as well as electric devices, is positively forbidden.

"That makes it rather tough for you,

doesn't it," I said, "with all your flame-producing appliances? Shall we go to another hotel?"

George said nothing, but went to get his hat. I sauntered over to the door to wait for him, but my eye was caught by a neatly-printed sign which, although I knew that it would contain nothing which could possibly affect me personally, I was utterly unable to keep from reading:

In accepting garments for valet service it is thoroughly understood that they do not contain money, jewelry, or any other articles of value, and, consequently ——

"Come on, come on!" said George. "We're late now!"

"Just a minute!" It was I this time who had the preoccupied air. It was I whose eyes were glued to the tiny card and who could not leave until I had finished its stirring message ——

—consequently the hotel's management or any of its staff will not be held responsible

for the return of anything but the garments originally delivered.

"O. K.!" I announced briskly. "Come on!"

But George had found another sign on the wall by the door. This time we both read it together in silence.

Do not turn thumb latch when leaving room. Door is self-locking. Use thumb latch only when in room.

"What thumb latch is that?" George said, looking over the assortment of latches and catches on the door.

"This is it here," I said, equally engrossed.

"Don't turn it!" cried George, in terror. "It says not to turn it."

"Who's turning it?" I snapped back. "I was just seeing how it worked. Who would want to turn it, anyway?"

"You can't tell," replied George. "Somebody might have this room who had a terrible hunch for turning thumb latches. A hotel has to deal with a lot of strange eggs."

"What would happen if you did turn it?" I asked.

George shuddered. "It might transform the whole hotel into a pumpkin under our very feet," he said, in a low voice.

"Don't be so jumpy," I said, impatiently. "That sort of thing belongs to the Middle Ages—and, besides, it used to happen only at the stroke of midnight."

"What time is it now?" asked George. He was in a cold sweat.

"A quarter to five," I said, looking at my watch. "There's not much sense in going to that four-o'clock date now."

George agreed, so we took off our hats and spent the rest of the afternoon roaming about the room, reading signs to our hearts' content. We were rewarded by several even duller notices than the ones we had already studied and by a good 15 minutes over the 21 provisions of Act 146 of the state Legislature making it compulsory for the management of all inns, hotels, and boarding houses to maintain a safe in the office for the reception of valuables belonging to the guests.

"That's an old one," said George. "I've read that before."

"It's good, though," I said. "It always makes great reading. After all, old notices are best."

So we had dinner sent up to the room in order to complete our reading of the hotel laundry list (George flying into a rage at the charge of 75 cents for "dressing sacques") and, by bedtime, had cleaned up the entire supply of printed matter and were well into the Atlantic City telephone book.

If the hotels want to go still further in their campaigns to make their rooms interesting for their guests, I would suggest the introduction of a sort of treasure hunt for each room. On each door could be tacked a little legend saying something like: "I can be found by going (1) to the top of the possession of an old English queen (2) under an article, beginning with 'W,' highly prized by astronomers (3) between two Indian wigwam attachments (4) underneath an American revolutionary firearm."

The guest could then spend his evenings trying to figure out these hiding places and perhaps emerge richer by a cigarette lighter or one of those face cloths done up in tissue paper envelopes which the hotels are so crazy to have you take away. It wouldn't be so much the value of the prize as the fun of finding it, and it would serve the purpose which seems to be the aim of all modern hostelries —namely: to keep the guests out of the open air and to prevent them from going home.

ANOTHER UNCLE EDITH CHRISTMAS STORY

UNCLE EDITH said: "I think it is about time that I told you a good old-fashioned Christmas story about the raging sea."

"Aw, nuts!" said little Philip.

"As you will," said Uncle Edith, "but I shall tell it just the same. I am not to be intimidated by a three-year-old child. Where was I?"

"You were over backwards, with your feet in the air, if I know anything about you," said Marian, who had golden hair and wore it in an unbecoming orange ribbon.

"I guess that you probably are right," said Uncle Edith, "although who am I to say? Anyway, I *do* know that we sailed from Nahant on the fourteenth March."

"What are you—French?" asked little Philip, "the fourteenth March."

"The fourteenth *of* March, then," said Uncle Edith, "and if you don't shut up I will keep right on with the story. You can't intimidate me."

"Done and done," said little Philip, who bled quite a lot from a wound in his head inflicted a few seconds before by Uncle Edith.

"We set sail from Nahant on the fourteenth *of* March (nya-a-a-a-a) on the good ship *Patience W. Littbaum*, with a cargo of old thread and bound for Algeciras."

"End of story!" announced Marian in a throaty baritone.

"It is *not* the end of the story, and I will sue anyone who says that it is," petulated Uncle Edith. "You will know well enough when I come to the end of the story, because

I shall fall over on my face. Now be quiet or Uncle Edith will give you a great big abrasion on the forehead."

"I can hardly wait," said little Philip, or whichever the hell one of those children it

MAX SCHNIRR, SECOND MATE.

was, I can't keep them all straight, they are all so much alike.

"Aboard," continued Uncle Edith, "aboard were myself, as skipper ——"

"Skippered herring," (*a whisper*).

"—Lars Jannssenn, first mate; Max Schnirr,

second mate; Enoch Olds, third base; and a crew of seven whose names you wouldn't recognize. However, there we were.

"The first 709 days were uneventful. The sailmaker (a man by the name of Sailmaker, oddly enough) made eleven sails, but, as we had no more ships to put them on, and as our sails were O. K., we had to throw them overboard. This made the men discontented, and there were rumors of mutiny. I sent a reporter up to see the men, however, and the rumors were unconfirmed; so I killed the story. NO MUTINY was the head I put on it in the ship's paper that night, and everybody was satisfied."

"You great big wonderful animal," said Marian, running her tiny hand through Uncle Edith's hair.

"It was nothing," said Uncle Edith, and everybody agreed that it certainly was.

"However," continued the old salt pork, "everyone on board felt that something was wrong. We were at that time at Lat. seventy-eight, Long. seventy-eight, which cancelled

each other, making us right back where we started from——"

"Don't tell me that we are back at Nahant again," said little Philip, throwing up.

"Not exactly Nahant," said Uncle Edith, "but within hailing distance of a Nahanted ship."

"You just used Nahant in the first place so that you could pull that gag," said Primrose, who, up to this time, had taken no part in the conversation, not having been born.

"So help me God," said Uncle Edith, "it came to me like *that*!" And he snapped a finger, breaking it. "The ha'nted ship lay just off our starboard bow, and seemed to be manned by mosquitoes. As we drew alongside, however, we found that there was not a soul on board. Not a soul on board."

"That is the second time you have said that," said little whatever-his-name-is—Philip.

Uncle Edith made no reply other than to throw nasty little Philip into irons.

" 'Prepare to board!' was the order given.

And everybody, ignoring the chance for a pun, prepared to board the derelict. In a few seconds we were swarming over the side of the empty ship and searching every nook and cranny of her. The search, however, was fruitless. The ship's log was found in the wheelhouse, but, as the last entry read, 'Fair and warm. Billy said he didn't love me as much as he does Anna' we discarded that as evidence. In the galley we found a fried egg, done on only one side, and an old bo'sun who was no good to anybody. Other than these two things, the mystery was complete."

"Not that I give a damn," said Marian, "but what was the explanation to this almost complete mystery?"

"If you will shut your trap," said Uncle Edith, "I will tell you. As I may not have told you, the mystery ship was full of sleeping Hessian troops, such as were used against the colonists in the Revolutionary War. They were very gay in their red coats and powdered wigs, and, had they been awake, might have

offered some solution of the problem which now presented itself to us.

" 'What shall I do, cap'n?' asked Lars Jannssenn, who had been promoted to purser.

" 'What would you *like* to do, Lars?' I asked him.

" 'Me, I would like to have three wishes,' was the typically Scandinavian reply. (Lars had belonged to the Scandi-navy before he joined up with us.)

" 'They are yours,' I said, more on the spur

of the moment than anything else. 'You take your three wishes and put them in your hat and pull it down over your ears. Anybody else?'

"Suddenly there was a scream from below decks. I have heard screams in my day, but never anything like this one. It was dark by now, and there were a lot of couples necking in the lifeboats. But this scream was different. It was like nothing human. It came from the bowels of the ship, and you know that's bad.

" 'All hands below!' I cried, and just as everybody was rushing down the hatchways there came a great explosion, seemingly from the jib.

" 'All hands to the jib!' I cried in my excitement.

" 'What is all this—a game?' asked the crew, as one man.

" 'I am captain here,' I said, boxing the compass roundly, 'and what I say goes! In the future please try to remember that fact.'

"Well, this sort of thing went on for hours.

Up and down the ship we went, throwing overboard Hessians in our rush, until finally the cook came to me and said: 'Cap'n, I frankly am sick of this. Are there, or are there not, any reasons why we should be behaving like a pack of schoolboys?'

"This was a poser. I called the crew together and we decided to go back to the *Patience W. Littbaum.* But, on looking over the side, we found a very suspicious circumstance. *The Patience W. Littbaum was gone!*"

"I don't believe it!" said little Philip, from the brig.

Uncle Edith turned sharply. "I thought you were in irons," he said.

"You think a lot," replied little Philip, and the entire casino burst into a gale of laughter, although it was a pretty lousy come-back, even for a three-year-old.

"Very well, then," said Uncle Edith. "I am sorry if you feel that way. For I was just going to end the story by saying that we sailed the mystery ship back to Nahant."

"And where does Christmas come in?" piped up Marian, who hadn't heard a word of Uncle Edith's story.

"Who the hell said anything about Christmas?" asked Uncle Edith in a rage.

And who the hell did?

ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR!

If I grow up to be a puny, under-developed sort of man, with a narrow chest and no eyelashes, it will be because modern civilization has made it so difficult for me to get any exercise. Not that modern civilization will give a darn.

I try and try to find some means of sending a little of that rare old Benchley blood coursing through my veins at even a slightly faster pace than a float in a Carnival of Roses parade. I don't ask for much of my blood in the way of speed. Just to have it keep moving and not hang around getting in the way of food-particles and other things that may want to *get* somewhere is all I need. But I can't seem to get any exercise. And, without exercise, the only way you can stimulate your circulation is to have somebody come in and

slap you all over. Not for me, thank you! I still have my pride left.

About once a year I come to the realization that unless I get some form of exercise pretty soon I will have little ferns and things growing out on me; so I make out a schedule of quick darting movements to be made at various times of the day, usually just before getting into the tub in the morning. Now other men seem to be able to find space enough in their room to do a daily dozen or two without banging their elbows against furniture, but I am not so fortunate. No matter how big my room is and no matter how simple my drill, I always bang my elbows against a wall or a bureau at one time or another. I believe that I could stand in the middle of the floor of the room in which they signed the Versailles Treaty, and within a minute and a half be whacking an arm or knee against a wall or one of those big glass chandeliers.

I think that one of my chief troubles in this respect is that I hitch sideways very slowly as

I work. I know that this is true when I am lying on the floor in one of those exercises which call for lying on the back and waving the legs aloft. I can lie on my back in the middle of an enormous room, miles from any one of the four walls, and, by the time I have got my legs up and down six times, I will have hitched myself in a diagonal line to the right until I give myself a nasty crack against the baseboard. If it were a part of the drill to do that I probably couldn't do it with such precision. I don't understand how it is done to this day. In fact, I used to think that perhaps the wall moved in toward *me* instead of my moving toward the wall, but my knowledge of physics came to my aid and made me realize that such a thing was probably impossible. I hitch, and that is all that there is to it.

Of course, this makes it unfeasible to try any of those exercises on the bed. There was a time when I had a very scratchy rug in my room and, rather than lie down on it and get burrs in my back, I tried lying on the bed

when it came time to wave my legs. Although this was a much pleasanter way of doing it, I found that my tendency to hitch sideways had me off on the floor in no time, once in a while hurting myself rather badly.

Another disadvantage to doing the supine exercises on a bed was that I found myself going back to sleep in the middle of them. If I had been out late the night before and had a disinclination to getting up anyway, I found that as soon as I got back on the bed to do the leg work I was dozing off again, sometimes with my legs in the air. There is something about the feeling of the pillow under your head and the soft mattress under your back that makes exercise seem like a hollow mockery, and the last time I did it I went right back to sleep again and slept until noon. So *that* is out.

This inability to find any place in my own house in which to do morning setting-up rather starts the day off badly. I might be able to get back into shape again if I could work at it in the morning, but since this is evidently

out of the question I am forced to get my exercise during the day. And you know what "during the day" is. It is *never.*

Walking to work is supposed to be an excellent form of body movement and I suppose that if I worked out in the country

somewhere, filling silos or worrying sheep, I could get a good three or four miles in on my way to work. But most of the time I work right in the room next to where I sleep, and while on a good brisk morning I can easily walk it, it doesn't do an awful lot for my circulation. Eight good long steps and I am

at my desk. I suppose that I *might* walk in and out of my bed-room and work-room two or three hundred times before sitting down to work, but, even if nobody saw me at it, I would feel pretty silly. And, even then, I doubt if it would do me much good, what with bumping into chairs and tables and stopping to read the morning paper every few feet. So walking to work is out. And the day is half over.

Walking to lunch suggests itself as the next possibility, but I very seldom eat lunch. And even when I do go out for a bite there are so many other people walking to and from lunch that I keep slipping off the curb and into the gutter every few feet to get out of their way. I suppose that I *could* elbow along the way a great many of them do and make *other* people step off into the gutter, but somehow it seems easier not to put up the fight. I might, when I go out to lunch, put on a sweater and sneakers and run at a dog-trot up Fifth Avenue, thus giving people the idea that I really mean business, but then, by

BY THE TIME I GOT TO LUNCH I WOULD BE ALL RED AND WET AND NOT A VERY GOOD COMPANION.

the time I got to lunch, I would be all red and wet and not a very good companion I am afraid.

In fact, walking as an exercise when one lives in the city is pretty unsatisfactory, in the first place because you have to keep stopping to let traffic go by, or, if you are so bent on walking that you *don't* stop, you are going to get a large town-car on the hip and *then* where is your physical condition? You can run up and down stairs in a twenty-story building if you like, but people who do that are always dropping dead, and that's no fun either.

Every once in a while I join some gymnasium class composed of business men who have just begun to realize that they can't get rid of that extra-waist simply by tightening their belts. I have given this up because it always brings on some serious illness in me. The last time I went to a class and bounced around with bankers and advertising men, I came down with a complete disintegration of the joints and had to be all taken apart and

put together again. It seemed that I had been storing up poison in my system for years, but so long as I walked gently on tip-toe and did nothing to stir it up, I was fine. The minute I began jarring it by bounding around on mats and waving my arms, all the poison got to circulating through my system and got shaken into places where it never would have thought of going before, with the result that I had to have a man come up from the garage with a blow-torch to get it out of my joints. It was the exercise that did it. If I had left the poison alone where it was hurting no one, I would have been all right.

Hand-ball is another form of after-office-hours exercise which I cannot indulge in, chiefly because it bores the living life out of me and I don't like the air in a hand-ball court anyway. When I was even a smaller boy than I am now, we used to have a cave in my cellar which extended out under the sidewalk and into which we used to crawl with candles and smoke cubebs. After a good

rainy spell this cave, with the damp candle and cubeb smoke, was the nearest thing to a hand-ball court that I can remember. I could fling myself about in a hand-ball court all day, even with the windows wide open, and get no more physical benefit than I used to get from crawling around in that hole under the sidewalk of King Street. A lot of men seem to do it, and, while I wouldn't go so far as to say that they *look* any better for it, they evidently enjoy it. I guess I must be made of rather finer stuff.

Perhaps that is the trouble anyway. Maybe Nature didn't intend me to exercise. She certainly doesn't make it very easy for me to. It might very well be that I am more the dreamer type, designed to lie on one elbow on a rock in the Mediterranean and evolve little fancies without ever so much as raising a finger. In this case I should have to have my food brought out to me from some good caterer on shore, as shell-fish poison me. There must be some people who do not have

to take exercise, and I might as well be one of them. It would fit into my scheme of life much better.

But I do like starchy foods. And there we are, right back where we started from.

CONGENIAL SOULS WANTED

STATION WGL has announced that every Saturday evening at 6:25 its "Get-Together Club" will meet by radio and will hear announcements read from its audience of "lonely people who desire to meet some congenial soul."

WGL wishes it distinctly understood that "all letters to this end will be rigorously investigated before being read and no ulterior motives will be allowed to intrude themselves into this altogether altruistic project."

We need hardly say that reason totters at a contemplation of the possibilities of this "Get-Together Club" of WGL's. Leaving those certain "ulterior motives" entirely out of it, and defying WGL to find anything off-color in their import, we submit the following appeals for congenial souls to be read at

the next Club meeting (to be followed by informal dancing):

DEAR WGL:

I am thirty-eight years old and considered good-looking, but I never seem to meet any girls that I can talk to. It is probably my business that is to blame. I am the man who walks around Times Square on stilts so much. If some member of the Club could get another pair of stilts and come around with me to keep me company, even if it were only on Tuesdays, I would be a much happier boy.

JOE ("STILTS") COONEY

DEAR GET-TOGETHER CLUB:

Will you please, through your wide membership, find for me a young woman who speaks Litvok without a northern accent? I myself speak nothing but South Litvok (I am having this letter translated for me by the Consul)—so you may well imagine I get pretty lonesome at times. I have plenty of

people with whom I have a nodding acquaintance, and there is an awfully nice young woman in the bunk above me who speaks Litvok, but with a northern accent which I cannot understand. If there are any members of the Club who speak my kind of Litvok and who can eat *korhehz crajozc* (which I can cook but which no one but my landsmen can eat) I wish that she would give me a ring at Drydock 0486.

LONESOME LITVOK

Howdy, members of the "Get-Together Club"! I am George Georgette, the "Half-Man, Half-Woman" stationed in the Dime Museum at Delancey and Third Ave., and I am looking for a congenial soul to pal around with. I don't seem to be able to hitch up with anybody who exactly understands me. I have been keeping company with a fellow and his sister but they went to Fall River to live. It gets mighty lonely around the Museum along about closing time and if any of you happen

to be Half-Man, Half-Woman, I wish you would drop me a line and the four of us could have some fun.

GEORGE GEORGETTE
("Nature's Slip-Up")

THE SUNDAY MENACE

I AM not a gloomy man by nature, nor am I easily depressed. I always say that, no matter how much it looks as if the sun were never going to stop shining and no matter how long the birds carry on their seemingly incessant chatter, there is always a good sleet storm just around the corner and a sniffly head cold in store for those who will only look for it. You can't keep Old Stepmother Nature down for long.

But I frankly see no way out of the problem of Sunday afternoon. For centuries Sunday afternoon has been Old Nell's Curse among the days of the week. Sunday morning may be cheery enough, with its extra cup of coffee and litter of Sunday newspapers, but there is always hanging over it the ominous threat of 3 P. M., when the sun gets around to the back windows and Life stops

dead in its tracks. No matter where you are —in China, on the high seas, or in a bird's nest—about 3 o'clock in the afternoon a pall descends over all the world and people everywhere start trying to think of something to do. You might as well try to think of something to do in the death house at Sing Sing, however, because, even if you do it, where does it get you? It is still Sunday afternoon.

The Blue Jeebs begin to drift in along about dessert at Sunday dinner. The last three or four spoonfuls of ice cream somehow lose their flavor and you begin crumbling up your cake instead of eating it. By the time you have finished coffee there is a definite premonition that before long, maybe in 40 or 50 minutes, you will be told some bad news, probably involving the death of several favorite people, maybe even yourself. This feeling gives way to one of resignation. What is there to live for, anyway? At this point, your dessert begins to disagree with you.

On leaving the dining room and wandering aimlessly into the living room (living

I REALLY HAVE NO REMEDY FOR SUNDAY AFTERNOONS.

room, indeed; there will be precious little living done in that room this afternoon), every one begins to yawn. The drifts of Sunday papers on the floor which looked so cozy before dinner now are just depressing reminders of the transitory nature of human life. Uncle Ben makes for the sofa and promptly drops off into an unattractive doze. The children start quarreling among themselves and finally involve the grownups in what threatens to be a rather nasty brawl.

"Why don't you go out and play?" some one asks.

"Play what?" is their retort, and a good one, too.

This brings up the whole question of what to do and there is a half-hearted attempt at thinking on the part of the more vivacious members of the party. Somebody goes to the window and looks out. He goes back to his chair, and somebody else wanders over to another window and looks out there, pressing the nose against the pane and breathing ab-

sent-mindedly against the glass. This has practically no effect on the situation.

In an attempt to start conversation, a garrulous one says, "Heigh-ho!" This falls flat, and there is a long silence while you look through the pile of newspapers to see if you missed anything in the morning's perusal. You even read the ship news and the book advertisements.

"This life of Susan B. Anthony looks as if it might be a pretty good book," you say.

"What makes you think so?" queries Ed crossly. Ed came out to dinner because he was alone in town, and now wishes he hadn't. He is already thinking up an excuse to get an early train back.

There being no good reason why you think that the life of Susan B. Anthony might be interesting, you say nothing. You didn't really think that it might be interesting, anyway.

A walk is suggested, resulting in groans from the rest of the group. The idea of bridge arouses only two out of the necessary four to

anything resembling enthusiasm. The time for the arrival of Bad News is rapidly approaching and by now it is pretty fairly certain to involve death. The sun strikes in through the window and you notice that the green chair needs reupholstering. The rug doesn't look any too good, either. What's the use, though? There would be no sense in getting a lot of new furniture when every one is going to be dead before long, anyway.

It is a funny thing about the quality of the sunshine on a Sunday afternoon. On other days it is just sunshine and quite cheery in its middle class way. But on Sunday afternoon it takes on a penetrating harshness which does nothing but show up the furniture. It doesn't make any difference where you are. You may be hanging around the Busy Bee lunch in Hongkong or polishing brass on a yacht in the North sea; you may be out tramping across the estate of one of the vice-presidents of a big trust company or teaching Indians to read in Arizona. The Sunday afternoon

sunlight makes you dissatisfied with everything it hits. It has got to be stopped.

When the automobile came in it looked as if the Sunday afternoon problem was solved. You could climb in at the back door of the old steamer and puff out into the country, where at least you couldn't hear people playing "Narcissus" on the piano several houses away. (People several houses away are always playing "Narcissus" on the piano on Sunday afternoons. If there is one sound that is typical of Sunday afternoon, it is that of a piano being played several houses away.) It is true, of course, that even out in the country, miles away from everything, you could always tell that it was Sunday afternoon by the strange behavior of the birds, but you could at least pick out an open field and turn somersaults (first taking the small change out of your pockets), or you could run head-on into a large oak, causing insensibility. At least, you could in the early days of automobiling.

But, as soon as everybody got automobiles,

the first thing they did naturally was to try to run away from Sunday afternoon, with the result that every country road within a hundred miles of any city has now taken the place of the old-time county fair, without the pleasure of the cattle and the jam exhibits. Today the only difference between Sunday afternoon in the city and Sunday afternoon in the country is that, in the country, you don't know the people who are on your lap.

Aside from the unpleasantness of being crowded in with a lot of strangers on a country road and not knowing what to talk about during the long hours while the automobiles are waiting to move ahead, there is the actual danger of an epidemic. Supposing some one took a child out riding in the country on Sunday and while they were jammed in line with hundreds of thousands of other pleasure riders the child came down with tonsilitis. There she would be, a carrier of disease, in contact with at least two-thirds of the population, giving off germs right and left and perhaps starting an epidemic which would

sweep the county before the crowds could get back to their homes and gargle. Subways and crowded tenements have long been recognized as breeding grounds for afflictions of the nose and throat. Are country roads on Sunday afternoons to be left entirely without official regulation?

I really have no remedy for Sunday afternoon, at least none that I have any confidence in. The only one that might work would be to rearrange the week in your own mind so that Sunday afternoon falls on Saturday. Now, Saturday afternoon is as cheery as Sunday afternoon is depressing. Perhaps we might try taking a day from some week, let us say a Wednesday which wouldn't matter, then Saturday would be Sunday and Sunday would be Monday. This would do away with all that problem of what to do on Sunday afternoon, because there are always plenty of things to do on Saturday. And you would get the benefit of Saturday afternoon sunshine, which is really delightful. Sunday afternoon sunshine would then wreak its havoc on Mon-

day afternoon and you would be working anyway and might not notice it.

Of course, this system would be complicated unless everybody else would agree to make the same rearrangement in the week, and that might take quite a long time to bring about. If you were making a date for, let us say, Friday morning, you would have to say, "That would be Thursday morning of your week," and perhaps people would get irritated at that. In fact, word might get around that you were a little irresponsible and your business might drop off. Personally, a little slump in business would not be too great a price for me to pay for having Sunday fall on Saturday, but I don't suppose that I could sell the idea to many of you money-mad Americans. I may have to be a lone pioneer in the thing and perhaps be jeered at as Fulton was jeered at. All right, go ahead and jeer.

But, until the thing is in good running order, there will have to be some suggestions

as to what to do on Sunday afternoon as we have it now. I can do no more than hint at them, but if there is one among them which appeals to you in outline, I will be glad to take it up with you in more detail.

First, I would suggest setting fire to the house along about 1:30 P. M. If the fire were nursed along, it would cause sufficient excitement to make you forget what day it was, at least until it was time to turn on the lights for the evening. Of you might go down into the cellar right after dinner and take the furnace apart, promising yourself to have it put together again by supper time. Here, at least, the sunlight couldn't get at you. Or you could rent a diver's suit and go to the nearest body of water and spend the afternoon tottering about under the surface, picking sea anemone and old bits of wreckage.

The method which I myself have tried with considerable success and little expense, however, is to buy a small quantity of veronal at the nearest druggist's, put it slyly in my coffee

on Saturday night, and then bundle off to bed. When you wake up on Monday morning you may not feel crisp, but Sunday will be over.

And that, I take it, is what we are after.

ASK ME A QUESTION

PROFESSORS in our universities are getting awfully nosey of late. They are always asking questions or sending out questionnaires inquiring into your private life. I can remember the day when all that a professor was supposed to do was to mark "C minus" on students' examination papers and then go home to tea. Nowadays they seem to feel that they must know just how much we (outside the university) eat, what we do with our spare time, and how we like our eggs. I, for one, am inclined not to tell any more. I already have filled in enough stuff on questionnaires to get myself divorced or thrown into jail.

A particularly searching series of questions has just come from an upstate university trying to find out about my sleeping habits. The director of the psychological laboratory wants

to know a lot of things which, if I were to give them out, would practically put me in the position of sleeping in John Wanamaker's window. I would have no more privacy than Irvin Cobb.

The first question is a simple one: "How many hours do you sleep each night, on the average?"

Well, professor, that would be hard to say. I might add "and what's it to you?" but I suppose there must be some reason for wanting to know. I can't imagine any subject of less general interest than the number of hours I sleep each night on the average. No one has ever given a darn before, and I must say that I am rather touched at this sudden display of interest on the part of a stranger. Perhaps if I were to tell him that I hardly sleep at all he would come down and read to me.

But I would like to bet that the professor gets a raft of answers. If there is one thing that people like to talk about it is their sleeping habits. Just get a group started telling how much or how little they sleep each night

and you will get a series of personal anecdotes which will put the most restless member of the party to sleep in no time.

"Well, it's a funny thing about me," one will say. "I get to bed, we'll say, at 11:30, and I go to sleep the minute my head hits the pillow and sleep right through until 7:30."

He will be interrupted at this point by some one who insists on having it known that the night before he heard th clock strike 2, 3, and 4. (People always seem to take a great deal of pride in having heard the clock strike 2, 3, and 4. You will seldom find one who admits having slept soundly all through the night. Just as a man will never admit that the suit he has on is new, so is he loath to confess that he is a good sleeper. I don't understand it, but, as I am getting pretty old now, I don't much care.)

You will be lucky if, in an experience meeting of this kind, you don't start some one off telling the dream he had a few nights ago.

"It was the darnedest thing," some one

will say, as the rest pay no attention, but try to think up dreams they themselves have had recently, "it was the darnedest thing. I seemed to be in a sort of big hall, only it wasn't exactly a hall either; it was more of a rink or schoolhouse. It seemed that Harry was there and all of a sudden instead of Harry it was Lindbergh. Well, so we all were going to a football game or something and I had on my old gray suit, except that it had wheels on it——"

By this time everybody is engaged in lighting cigarettes or looking at newspapers or even talking to some one else in a low tone of voice, and the narrator of the dream has practically no one to listen to him except the unfortunate who happens to be sitting next. But he doesn't seem to care and goes right on, until he has finished. There is a polite murmur of "What had you been eating?" or "That certainly was a corker," and then some one else starts. The professor who sent this questionnaire will have to watch out for this sort of thing or he will be swamped.

The whole list is just a temptation to garrulousness. Question No. 3, for example, is likely to get people started on an hour's personal disclosure. "Do you notice ill effects the day after sleeping on a train?" is the way it is worded.

Well, now take me for example. I'm glad you asked that, professor. I do notice ill effects the day after sleeping on a train. I notice, in the first place, that I haven't got my underthings buttoned correctly.

Dressing in a Pullman berth is, at best, a temporary form of arraying oneself, but if I happen to have to go right from the train to my engagement without going first to a hotel and doing the whole thing over again, I find, during the day, that I have buttoned the top button of my running drawers into the bottom buttonhole of my waistcoat and that one whole side of my shirt is clamped, by some mysterious process, half way up my back. This, as the day wears on, exerts a pull on the parts affected until there is grave danger of the whole body becoming twisted to the right,

or left, as the case may be. This, in turn, leads to an awkward gait in walking and is likely to cause comment. Of course, if it is a strange town, people may think that you walk that way naturally and, out of politeness, say noth-

ing about it, but among friends you are pretty sure to be accused of affectation or even worse.

Another ill effect, professor, which I feel after having slept on a Pullman (leaving aside the inevitable cold in the head acquired

from sleeping with a light brown blanket piled high on one hip), is the strange appearance I present when I take my hat off.

As I am usually the last man in the washroom, I am constantly being harried by the porter, who keeps coming to the door and telling me that the train is pulling out into the yards in three minutes. (It is always three minutes, never less and never, by any chance, more.) Now, with this unpleasant threat hanging over me, I am in no state of mind to make my customary exquisite toilet. I brush my teeth and possibly shave one-half of my face, but almost invariably forget to brush my hair. It is all right going through the station with my hat on, but later in the day, when I come to my business appointments, I notice that I am the object of considerable curious attention from people who do not know me, owing to my hair standing on end during an entire conference or even a luncheon. It is usually laid to my being a writer and of an artistic temperament, but it doesn't help me in a business way.

Now you will see what you got yourself into by merely asking me that one question, professor. I could go on like this for hours, telling about the ill effects I feel the day after sleeping in a Pullman, but maybe you aren't interested any longer. I am afraid I have bored you already.

The next question, however, is likely to start me off again. "Do you usually sleep through the night without awakening?"

It is funny that you should have asked that. I was just about to tell you anyway. Some nights I do, and some nights I don't. I can't be any more explicit than that.

When my little boys were small, I really can't say that I did. Not that they really meant to be mean about it, or did it deliberately, but, as I look back on it, it seems that there was always something. A glass of water was usually the ostensible excuse, but a great many times it turned out to be just a desire on their part to be chummy and have some one to cry with. I would say that, during the infancy of my bairn, my average was some-

thing like 10 complete arisings from bed during the night and 15 incomplete ones. By "incomplete" I mean those little starts out of a sound sleep, where one leg is thrust out from under the bed clothes while one waits to see if maybe the disturbance will not die down of its own accord.

These abortive arisings are really just as disturbing to the sleep as the complete ones, and should count as much in any scientific survey. (I do not want to convey the impression that I did all the hopping up during the night. The mother of the boys did her share, but it was a good two-man job on which turns had to be taken. It also depended a lot on which one could the better simulate sleep at the time of the alarm.)

Now that the boys are old enough to get up and get Daddy water when he wants it, things are a little different, but I find that the amount of undisturbed sleep that I get in one night's rest is dependent on so many outside factors that it is almost impossible to make up any statistics on the subject. A great deal

of it depends on the neighbors and how much fun they happen to be having. Then there is the question of what tunes I've heard during the day. One good, monotonous tune firmly imbedded in my consciousness will make going to bed just a matter of form.

Two nights ago I retired early for a good rest (my first since 1921), but unfortunately spent seven out of my possible eight hours trying to get "What Is This Thing Called Love?" out of my mind. If I had only known some more of the words it wouldn't have been quite so bad, but one can't go on, hour after hour, mentally singing "What is this thing called love—what is this thing called love—what is this thing called love," without suffering some sort of nervous breakdown. It would have been much better for me to have been walking the streets than lying there in bed, plugging a song for nobody in particular.

It is this sort of thing which makes it difficult to answer Question No. 4. One night

I am one way; the next night I am another way.

The only means that I can think of for the professor to employ to get an accurate check-up on my sleeping habits would be for him to come down to my place and sleep on an army cot at the foot of my bed himself. He would have to bring his own blankets, though, as I have hardly enough for myself as it is.

NEW PLAYS FOR OLD

As it is a little difficult to follow Mei Lan-fang, the recently imported Chinese "King of Actors," unless you happen to know what a twist of the sleeve or a tilt of the fan means to the Chinese—and even then you can't be quite sure—we have prepared one or two lit-the playlets for Mei's program in case he runs out of good ones.

"Kei-Lang's Parting with Old Mice, or Love's Gift"

Yo-Chang, Kei-Lang's ling-chung..... Mei Lan-fang

A Rubber.....

Yo-Chang enters, singing that she has just come up from downstairs and that nobody was down there. She pulls her left sleeve down to about three-quarters of an inch below her wrist, which signifies that she is lying and that she has really been downstairs

all afternoon with Lang making *loopee*, an ancient Chinese debauchery. This goes on until about nine-thirty or ten.

Pao Wen enters, going through the conventional pantomime of mounting a horse and getting off again because the stirrups are too high. Yo-Chang sings that she would like to know what in hell he is bringing the horse into the living-room for, all the while tickling the right ankle with the left foot, which signifies that it is really a very fortunate thing that he did bring the horse in because it will keep him (Pao Wen) amused and he won't ask questions. Pao Wen is, in the meantime, going through the conventional pantomime of feeding imaginary sugar to the imaginary horse and the imaginary horse is going through the conventional pantomime indicating that he thinks that the sugar has been soaked in ether for the purpose of getting him out of the way. He (the horse) is pretty sore at this. (It is a common symbolism in Chinese drama that a cross horse in a living-room means three days of rain, followed by

clearing and colder. You would know this if you were Chinese and if you don't know it, that is your hard luck.)

Yo-Chang whips out four brownish flags, with crossed knives painted on them in red, which means Indigestion. "I feel awful," she sings for twenty minutes. Pao Wen comes back at her by flashing a duster made of camel's hair, which is the symbol of Indifference Masquerading Under a Show of Polite Interest. In China, only gods, demi-gods, Taoist priests, and members of the Union Club may flash a duster of camel's hair and the only explanation of Pao Wen's having one is that he has stolen it or got it at a pawnshop. You will have time to go out and bake a cake while this is going on.

Yo-Chang, in desperation, executes what is known as the Set-Tubs Dance, which indicates that she has been standing over the set tubs all day long and is getting pretty sick of it too. She is accompanied in this dance by an off-stage harlot playing the Yueh-Ch'in or Lemon Guitar, an instrument consisting of

a round piece of wood with three and a half strings (shorter than those on the Hu-Ch'in, mind you, but not so short as to be ridiculous), attached to the pegs of which is a strip of bacon, not very crisp, please.

It is doubtful if you will sit through this, so the rest of the plot doesn't matter.

"The Auspicious Wheel and the Lukewarm Water"

This is out of the Golden Age of Chinese drama (80,000-76,000 B.C.). It is also sometimes used as a sauce.

Chang-Li, a sort of chap.....
Li-Chang, his sweetheart (she thinks).....
.....Mei Lan-fang
Chong-Lo, an Irish coster.....

Li-Chang enters singing that her name is Li-Chang and that her address is 294 East Ninety-seventh Street. (It is an age-old custom for Chinese actors to give their name and address on making their entrance. This eliminates vagrants.) She sings also that the best that she could do on those seats were four

in the eighteenth row or two-and-two in the fourteenth and fifteenth. Chong-Lo turns up the collar of his coat, indicating that he will take the two in the fourteenth and let the other two go.

This is accompanied by music on the Hsiao or Small Gong, which is convex and just a little below the key of F flat without quite being in the key of E sharp. It sounds awful.

At this point in the drama, nobody comes on. Li-Chang waits for a while, singing and pushing her sleeves up and down. As the audience doesn't seem to care much, the show closes on Saturday.

THE KING'S ENGLISH: NOT MURDER BUT SUICIDE

BEING by nature and carefully acquired tastes something of an Anglophile, the following rather bitter outburst is going to hurt me more than it hurts England. In fact when, in the old days before I began filling out, I was occasionally told by strangers that I looked as if I might be English, I very often did nothing to correct the impression and even went so far as to throw in a word like "shedule" or "*cem*ent" deliberately to strengthen it. England has no better friend in the world than I am, even though I sometimes appear out of patience. That is because I am tired.

But, royalist though I am at heart, I find myself taking the old musket down from the wall and priming it for a determined stand against the redcoats who continue to assail our right to pronounce words as they are

spelled. For years we colonists have submitted meekly to the charge that we speak the English language badly. We know that it is true in a way, that our voices are harsh and loud, that some of us roll our "r's" while others say "boid" and "erl," and we also know that, in the matter of vocabulary we are mere children lisping "cat," "doggie" and "O.K." exclusively. And the knowledge of these shortcomings, together with the venomous scorn with which our English friends point them out, has bred an inferiority in us which is nothing short of craven. We never think of turning on our tormentors and saying "You're not so hot yourselves!"

British nausea at American pronunciation has reached an almost active stage since the invasion of England by Hollywood-made talking-pictures. London editorial writers have taken the matter into their own hands and are now urging an embargo on American films on the charge of corrupting their youth. They see the complete degradation of the English language in fifty years if little

English children are allowed to listen at their movies to the horrid sound of Americans talking. There has been some idea of limiting the sale of tickets to those of his Majesty's subjects who are safely established in the traditional English habits of speech, barring at the door all those in the formative stage. Others would have the pictorial parts of the films made in Hollywood (since England seems to be having a little trouble in making any that will sell) but the sound-tracts made in Elstree by strictly British voices, the two being synchronized to produce a picture which may be listened to by English tots without fear of contamination. The whole island is evidently on the verge of a panic such as might arise at the approach of a fleet of cholera-ridden ships up the Thames.

No one in America will deny that many of the beautiful young gentlemen and ladies of Hollywood should never have been called upon to talk, especially with sound-reproduction in the elementary stage of today. Nei-

ther will anyone deny that a large number of American actresses and actors who go to London in the spoken drama might well offend the sensitive British ear. They have offended even the cauliflower ear of New York.

But is England entirely without sin in the matter of language distortion? Might New York never justifiably be distressed by the sounds made by the countless English casts which come over here to earn twice what they could earn at home? Is the frequent confusion in the minds of American audiences as to just what the English actors are saying on the stage due to the fact that our auditory faculties are not attuned to pure English or to the fact that the English actors are not pronouncing the words properly as they are spelled? If spelling means anything at all in the pronunciation of a word, then the English are at fault. If it doesn't, then they are at fault anyway.

Of course, there can be no argument (and let us have this understood at the start,

please) over the comparative mellifluousness of English and American speech. Even the most incompetent English actor, coming on the stage briefly to announce the presence below of Lord and Lady Ditherege, gives forth a sound so soft and dulcet as almost to be a bar of music. But sometimes that is all there is. The words are lost in the graceful sweep of the notes. I have heard entire scenes played by English actors (especially juveniles) in which absolutely nothing was distinguishable except a series of musical notes ranging in cadenzas from B to G sharp and back to B again. It is all very pretty, but is it the English language?

This slurring of words into a refined cadence until they cease to be words at all is due partly to the Englishman's disinclination to move his lips. Evidently the lips and teeth are held stationary for the most part, open just wide enough to let in air for breathing (many Englishmen must breathe through their mouths, otherwise they would not breathe at all) with an occasional sharp purs-

ing of the lips on a syllable which does *not* call for pursing the lips. This lethargic attitude toward articulation makes more or less of a fool out of a word which is dependent on pronunciation for its success. It makes a rather agreeable sound of it, but practically eliminates it as an agent for expressing thought.

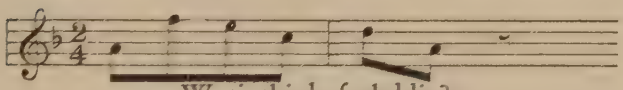
I am not dealing now with cockney or other perversions of the British manner of speaking, although Englishmen are not so fair as to remember that much of the speech which they call "American" on the stage and in pictures is deliberately vulgarized and harshened by the American actors themselves to imitate gangsters, newspaper reporters, and others of the non-classical group. I am speaking of the more "refayned" type of English actor, and even of the ordinary well-educated Englishman whom one meets in London and on the Riviera. They distort good old Anglo-Saxon words into mere blobs of sound, eliminating letters and syllables at will. And what they do to *French* words

must not be mentioned here because that is not strictly within the range of this thesis. Neither is it important.

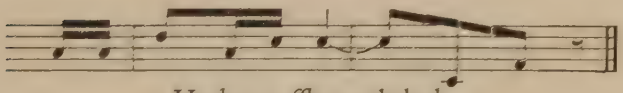
But it is safe to predict that a comparative tabulation of words in common use in England and America, analyzed phonetically as pronounced in each country, would give America a startling lead over the mother-country in accuracy. Saying them through the nose, as many Americans do, may not be so pleasant as saying them through the large palate, as many Englishmen do, but the words themselves get a better break and, at least, the integrity of the sentence is preserved.

The time is about ripe for someone to write a skit for an American revue, lasting perhaps three minutes, in which are reproduced the sounds made by a group of English juveniles such as come over here every year in plays of post-war younger-generationism, bounding on and off the stage carrying tennis racquets and giving off exuberance to the point of combustion. If I were writing such a sketch I would open the

scene with two or three young gentlemen and ladies lying about on window-seats and porch chairs in careless fashion, with the conversation running something like this:



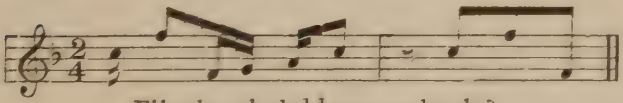
Wotjuthinkofrehddie?



Hesbeanofflyapsehtletly

Eheaidehntneh-hehesentehnyfethleft

At this point Reggie would come bursting into the room, with his shirt open at the neck, fresh from badminton and would call, swinging his body lithely from the hips:



Elleuhvrybohddyweresahncle?

Things would go on like this for a minute or two with absolutely no word being spoken, just a series of British sounds with a great deal of bounding about and quick darting movements of the heads and arms. The young men would stand with feet wide apart and hands jammed down into the side pockets of their coats, while the young ladies would stand with their feet not quite so far apart and their hands jammed down into the pockets of their sweaters. It would all have to be played very fast and loosely and might end with their all putting their heads together and doing the thing in harmony, still with no words. Or a canary, which had been hanging in a cage throughout the act, might join in with them until it fell dead from exhaustion. Or almost anything might happen, provided no sense was given to the lines.

A short time ago I heard *Major Barbara* done by an English company. The young man who played Cusins was a particularly vicious example of the songster-actor so prevalent on the English stage. Although I took no notes

and am not very good at carrying a tune, I should say that one of his speeches ran something like this: (The key was C sharp and the range was from B to G sharp in an almost continuous cadenza):

"Eetsnottth'sao ehvmeh seuhl thett trehbles meh; Eh hev seuhld et teuh efften teh care abeht thett. Eh hev seuhld et fereh preuhfessorshep. Eh hev seuhld et tescep beinempressoned feh refusin t'peh texes fer hengmen's reuhps end ehnjust wehrs end things thet ehabheuh. Wot es ehl humen cehnduct beht th'daioy end heuhrly sao of ehur seuhls f'trehfles? Wot ehem neuh seoinet feh is neither meneh ehr pesition nehr kemfet, bet freelity and fpeuher."

Is that any kind of English for our children to hear? If, and when, England makes talking-pictures which are good enough to be brought to this country, are we to sit by and let minors absorb this sort of distortion of our mother-tongue and perhaps grow up to speak it themselves? We pay good money to have them taught to say "don't" and

"donkey". Are they to be led by outlanders into saying "dehn't" and "dehnkey"? We have been brought up to believe that dropping the final "g" is the mark of a vulgarian. Are our children to hear "nice people" from England saying "runnin'" and "singin'"? No, a theuhsend tehms Neuh!

The fact is that neither Americans nor English have anything to boast of in the matter of pronunciations of their common tongue. There are a few people in each country who have got the hang of it, but for the most part a pretty bad job has been made of the whole thing. Probably the best English is spoken by foreigners who have taken the pains to learn it correctly.

COMMUNITY SINGING

WITH all the good will which threatens to be abroad in the world during the coming year I am afraid that it looks like a big year for community singing. I don't know why I have this feeling. It is a presentiment such as I have on damp days when my wrists start aching and I know that I am in for a touch of my arthritis. We are going to have a year of community singing, and we are going to have it good.

You may think that I am just an old alarmist, predicting all this before a note has really been sung or even before notices have been sent out for people to get together and start humming. "Wait until they begin to sing," you may say. "Then will be plenty of time to get disagreeable." But I want to be disagreeable now, and I have every reason in the world to be. Certain documents have come

to my hand which put things in an even blacker light than I have indicated. Without wishing to be a wet blanket, let me tell you what is already lined up in the way of community singing for the coming season.

Some travel bureau, with a mistaken idea of being alluring, has issued a pamphlet telling on just what dates you can get in on a good community sing. According to this schedule, if you hurry you can just make the musical festival in Dublin of Feis Ceoil (All Ireland), at which I imagine a great deal of tenor will be sung. Or, on Aug. 8, you can catch the Welsh national *eisteddfod*, which is to be held at Llanelly. This means singing, if I know anything about the Welsh. I am not quite sure about how to get to Llanelly, but I suppose you take a car marked "Llanelly" and ask the conductor where the *eisteddfod* is being held. He and the motorman will probably sing the directions to you.

Not only are the British isles threatened with countless get-together sings, smaller than the *feis ceoil* and the *eisteddfod*, but our

own dear land is already beginning to blow its pitch pipes in preparation for a year of song and little committees are springing up everywhere to send out postal cards and get all available larynxes lined up for service. Once these things start they sweep the country like wildfire. Remember how quickly that parrots' disease spread. (By the way, were those parrots ever deported or are they still going about the streets in droves endangering the lives of the nation?)

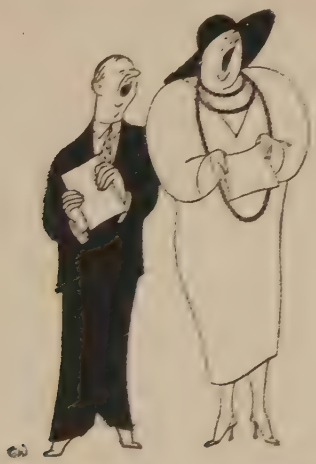
Community singing wouldn't be so bad if it really were community singing. But there are always several people (usually those who get the movement started) who do all the singing, or rather who do the loudest singing, and the rest of the community just stand around holding sheets of music and making low noises in their throats. The loud singers are usually sopranos and are big women who wear black jet beads. If they are not leading the thing completely, they dominate the chorus so that nobody else can make himself heard. No matter how domineering a basso

may be, he can't really drown out the rest, owing to the nature of bass singing itself. If you try to sing bass too loud your nose starts bleeding or your chin gets caught down in your collar and you choke to death (to the great satisfaction of everybody). Altos suffer from the same handicap, while tenors are usually of a mild and retiring nature and not given to masterful hogging of sound waves. It is the sopranos that you have to look out for.

Of course, underneath all this bitterness on my part you will detect that I have a personal feeling against some soprano who has drowned me out at some time or other. I like to sing (in a group) and, if I am fairly sure of my part, I like to be heard. In fact, I have been known to go out of my way to make myself heard. But I can't buck a soprano. I have even gone so far as to give up singing in mixed groups for this very reason. In a crowd of men I can hold my own, and frequently do, but in competition with large

ladies wearing black jet beads I am frankly outclassed. And I resent it.

There are certain kinds of group singing which are a great help to community, or party, spirit. Those little extemporaneous outbursts



around a piano, for which postcards do not have to be sent out and which develop naturally when some one comes across a pile of old music after dinner, are really the most satisfactory of all. That is, they are satisfactory for those who happen to be around the

piano singing. The rest of the people in the room are not likely to be so enthusiastic about it. I guess there are no looks so ugly as those shot at a little band of amateur singers by the people in other parts of the room who want to be talking or who are not interested in recalling songs of yesteryear.

But even in the little groups themselves there is likely to spring up some hard feeling, owing to one or two of the group being quicker than the rest to get their particular songs on the rack in front of the pianist. Every one, when old songs are being dragged out, has his favorites, either for sentimental reasons or because he happens to know all the words. And, if some one else happens to beat you to it in suggesting the number to be tried next, you are likely to stand in silence waiting for them to finish so that you can rush your own choice into the arena. This makes for bad team work and sometimes it happens that the only one singing is the one who has just won the toss.

"Remember this?" some one will shout

(the affair reaches the shouting stage very early in the game). And he will begin, in a loud voice, to sing "Call Me up Some Rainy Afternoon," both verses and two choruses. There will be perhaps two others who know a few of the words to "Call Me up Some Rainy Afternoon" and they will join in with something of a will, but those who are too young ever to have known it or who never liked it anyway assume a patently false politeness and wait, looking about the room, for the "Call Me up Some Rainy Afternoon" devotees to finish.

Then there is a babel of:

"Remember 'Pony Boy, Pony Boy, won't you be my ——' "

"No, no, this, 'Oh, the moon shines bright tonight upon ——' "

"No, no! Remember 'Lindy, Lindy, sweet as the sug ——' "

"Here's one! 'Dinah, is there any one finer?' " (This from one of the younger members of the group who is thoroughly disgusted

BUT EVEN IN THE LITTLE GROUPS THEMSELVES THERE IS LIKELY TO SPRING UP SOME HARD FEELING.

with the old boys who are insisting on singing songs he never even knew existed.)

"I'll tell you! 'Here's to the land that gave me birth, here's to the flag she flies, here's to the dumdy-dum-dum-dum ——' "

And so on. Every one has a song he wants sung, and it seldom is the song that any one else wants, although "Heidelberg" and "Kiss Me Again" usually win out against the field because more people remember the tune and the words don't matter so much. "Kiss Me Again," in fact, can be, and usually is, carried through to the end with no other words than "Kiss me again" being used. The only drawback to this number is that it calls for quite a vocal range toward the end, resulting in all but two or three lusty singers dropping out in terror before the final rousing notes have been given their full value. Not quite enough people usually drop out, however.

I have never known it to fail that if only one man remembers the words to a certain song, he remembers all the words to all the verses and perhaps one or two parodies which

were considered very funny at the time. And there is some sort of fever which lays hold of any one who is in full possession of words to a song which renders him impervious to the glares and interruptions of the others and makes him plow doggedly ahead through the entire number, his eyes bulging with pride and the cords of his neck straining with the effort of demonstrating his ability. It is an irritating sight, unless it happens to be I who am remembering the words. Then it is inconceivable that the others should not be interested. Which they are not.

If organized community singing must be done (and evidently it must) the thing to do is divide the town up into quartets, preferably all male with no sopranos, and put each quartet down in a good smoky back room where the air is bad, and let nature take its course. I know of nothing more soothing or productive of good feeling than to get three other guys, one of whom is not really a natural bass but who will fake it if some one else will carry the baritone, and then to go into a

huddle for an evening of ripe, rich swipes. With such little groups tearing off "Mandy Lee, I Love You" and "Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield" all over town, not much harm can come to the community, unless perhaps there should be a big blaze started in the town hall and some of the firemen should happen to be engaged in singing at the time. Then it would just be the town hall's hard luck, that's all.

In the meantime, don't forget: The Welsh national eisteddfod at Llanelly on Aug. 8. Let's make this just the best eisteddfod ever!

EXERCISE FOR THOSE AT SEA

ONE of the most pernicious effects of ocean-travel, as far as I am concerned, is the exercise one feels obliged to take. I sit at home for ten months of the year, right on one chair, getting no more exercise than is involved in thumbing a cigarette-lighter and turning the pages of a newspaper. (Sometimes, after turning all the pages of one of

those big Sunday editions, I have to go and lie down for a little while.) And my health during those ten months is simply elegant. Rosy cheeks, a good digestion, and sleep as soon as I hit the pillow (or whatever I happen to be sleeping on) are the rewards of my lethargic and sedentary life. If I were any healthier I would smell of pine needles, and I wouldn't take a walk around the Reservoir if Greta Garbo were to offer to go along with me. I wouldn't take a walk around the Reservoir even if I could be assured of being alone.

But once on shipboard I feel that I must exercise. I listen to people who say: "Of course, if you don't get exercise on board ship you will get logy." Logy? Boy, you don't know what logy is! If I were to get any logier than I am during the winter months they could prop me up in Wanamaker's window and hang dress goods on me. But somehow this never occurs to me at sea. I believe everyone who tells me that I must keep my blood circulating—my blood, which

hasn't know what it was to circulate since I used to ride a Columbia bicycle (without a coaster brake, because it was $5 extra). And, as a result, I go crazy mad for exercise and get myself good and sick.

I will say this for myself—I don't walk decks for exercise. I am not one of those who go barging past deck chairs, counting the rounds, and making everybody who is trying to get a little rest feel guilty and irritated. Once in a while, when most of the passengers have gone to bed, I may sneak out and take a few turns around alone, but that is just to get some air into my lungs before turning in. Those smoking rooms on our more expensive ships get awfully stuffy, especially if you have been eating olives.

No, sir! When I take exercise on shipboard, I take *exercise.* I go the whole hog—and the whole camel and horse and elephant and every one of those inventions of a German devil with which ships' gymnasiums are equipped. From a sedentary, sluggish, and almost entirely motionless human being, I

turn into a bouncing, whirling, and perspiring dervish, bent on shaking a leg or an arm completely off and giving my liver and kidneys the surprise of their middle-aged lives. I often wonder what my liver and kidneys think when, along about May or June of each year, they are suddenly prodded out of a sound sleep and twisted and hammered about at five o'clock each afternoon for a week and then put back to sleep again until the return trip in August. Not being an A. A. Milne, I can't get them to talk to me and *tell* me what they think, but I *do* know how they behave in return—and that it isn't very nicely.

At five o'clock sharp each afternoon on board ship, I don a strange costume which I feel, in a way, is rather dashing and athletic-looking, but which really is made up of such unimpressive articles as an undershirt, a pair of trousers, and bed-slippers. Then it is up to the gymnasium, two steps at a time, and onto the first piece of apparatus which is vacant. This usually is an electric horse, which has a gait something between a trot and a canter,

with just a suspicion of lope thrown in. I haven't been on a real horse since I discovered that horse hair gave me hay fever (and what a relief *that* was, to know that I had a good excuse for not riding!) but that does not deter me from letting myself be jounced up and down, with occasional attempts at posting, until my lower grinders are firmly imbedded in my upper ones and my head a throbbing mass of temples.

You would think that, as I survey my mates at work on the other pieces of apparatus, I would see how foolish I myself must look. Here they are, a lot of middle-aged men (with occasionally a real good *old* boy) dressed like people who rush out of a hotel in a fire, steaming around on bits of machinery, trying one until they get tired (which is almost immediately) then switching to another until they give every indication of bursting, all of them pudgy beyond repair and all of them thinking that in one week's time they are going to whip themselves back into some sort of shape. I will say this for

most of them—they don't keep it up for more than three days. The last part of the trip I have the gymnasium almost to myself. That is because I am not so smart as they are.

After the horse has had its pleasure with me, I submit myself to what is humorously known as the "camel." Here the twisting is done, first to the right, so that my left hip is dislocated, then to the left, throwing out my right hip. This goes on for some time, as the attendant forgets me and lets me sit there longer than I should. I make no move to get off, for I am afraid of getting a leg caught in the machinery, and so there I sit, writhing and twisting from the hips up, until the man has finished showing an old gentleman how to race himself on a stationary bicycle and then comes and mercifully lifts me off.

The rowing-machine and weights are more easily regulated, for I can stop doing those myself when I am exhausted. What is more, I *do* stop. I don't care what the attendant thinks—when I begin to see great red flames rising through the sweat which is pouring

down over my eyes, I stop. I know when I've had enough. Sometimes I am not able to get up out of the machine right away, but I stop at any rate. Someone will come along and lift me out before long. Red flames I don't like. Not for long at a time, anyway.

Then come the massage machines, which, after all this wrenching and rowing, seem like mechanical godsends. There is one in particular which comes as a grateful relief, and that is the pair of leather-bound rings which wriggle up and down your back. Prop me up against a pair of those and I am set for the afternoon. After a strenuous hour of punishment, I have been known to lean against those grinding rings and drop off into a fitful doze. Even if I do not go so far as to shut my eyes, I fall under the spell of the massage to such an extent that my eyes become fixed on the fencing foils hanging on the wall, my jaw drops, and my whole body twists loosely in rhythm to the crawling knobs. It is the height of ecstasy (or *one* of the heights) and on such occasions my mind

I COME DOWN WITH SOME SORT OF JOINT DISINTEGRATION OR OTHER AND HAVE TO BE CARRIED OFF THE BOAT.

wanders far from the ship and the sea and I dream that I am back in my little old chair at home, far from the apparatus and deck-tennis (as a matter of fact, I am bothered very little by deck-tennis, for no matter how much I feel that I ought to be playing, there is always somebody using the courts, thank God).

Thus do I undo all the good that a winter of lethargy has done me. After three days of exercising I find myself unable to sleep, my digestion suffers a complete disruption, and I feel strange pains creeping over me in parts of my body which I never knew that I had. My skin gets sallow and my eyes sunken, and, the day before I land, I come down with some sort of joint disintegration or other and have to be carried off the boat.

LAW-BREAKING AT ITS SOURCE

So now a commission of "eleven prominent Americans" is investigating lawlessness in the United States and trying to find a cure for it. . . . I am furious!

Is there to be no such thing as privacy? Can't a citizen be lawless without having "eleven prominent Americans" coming poking around trying to find out why? Just let Mr. Wickersham and his gang of hill-billies come knocking at *my* door to ask questions about *my* lawlessness and to see if there is anything they can do to stop it. I'll give them what for, and pretty quickly, too.

No I won't really, but I *shall* be awfully sore.

In case this commission appointed by our self-styled "President" Hoover has any intention of snooping about in my private affairs, I can save them a lot of time and the

car-fare to my house by giving them right now all the information they will ever get. Let us say that they decide to come to call on me on a Thursday afternoon, which is when I am busiest. Here is the interview as it will take place (and no more) and they may take it and leave it. I have had a stenographer take it down just as it would occur and so have saved them the trouble of bothering me.

(For purposes of confusion, I have called myself "Mr. Welchman" in this interview. The first name is Earl—Earl Welchman—in case anyone wants to know, although it does not appear in the stenographic report and will not be needed, as I intend to discard it at the end.)

The door-bell rings just as I am putting the biscuits into the oven. This starts me off in a bad mood anyway. I go to the door and find Mr. Wickersham, Mr. Newton D. Baker, three Federal judges, Dean Pound and five other prominent Americans, including Miss Ada L. Comstock, president of Radcliffe. I make no attempt to disguise my irritation.

MR. WICKERSHAM: Mr. Welchman?

MR. WELCHMAN: Well?

MR. WICKERSHAM: We represent President Hoover and would like a few minutes of your time for an interview if you would care to give it.

MR. WELCHMAN: I am very busy; could you get done with it right here on the steps? I haven't chairs enough for the whole lot of you in the front room.

MR. WICKERSHAM: I should think that it would be all right out here, wouldn't it, fellows? (*A majority of the commission vote "Aye".*)

MR. WELCHMAN: Then sit ye doon on these little straw porch-mats and (*good naturedly*) fire ahead!

(*During the remainder of the interview, Mr. Wickersham will be designated as Mr. W. and Mr. Welchman as Mr. W. also.*)

MR. W.: We have come to inquire about lawlessness in the United States.

MR. W.: Well, you certainly came to the

right man. I have broken every law in the United States except the one regarding specifying the amount of benzoate of soda on ketchup bottles.

MR. W.: That's fine! Maybe we won't have to interview anybody else after we have finished with you.

MR. W.: You will have plenty of *time* to interview others after you finish with me, if that's what you're worrying about. For you are going to finish with me in exactly two and a half minutes. (*Takes out watch and holds it.*)

MR. W.: What would you suggest, Mr. Welchman, as a remedy for lawlessness in this country? What, in your opinion, would give the public a greater respect for the Law?

MR. W.: More playgrounds, Mr. Wickersham. More playgrounds with more swings in them. Give the citizens of this country a place to play in during working hours, with plenty of swings that go good and

high, and you will find that your laws will take care of themselves.

MR. BAKER: Very sound, very sound!

MR. W.: You mean just ordinary swings, made of rope and a piece of board?

MR. W.: I mean just what I say, Mr. Wickersham. Swings. If you want me to be more specific I may say that a very good swing is got out by the Ooops-She-Goes Swing Company of 114 Chambers Street.

MR. W.: Thanks very much, Mr. Welchman. That's just what we wanted to find out. Did you get that name down, Miss Comstock?

MISS COMSTOCK: The Ooops-She-Goes Swing Company. I didn't get the address.

MR. W.: It's in the book.

MR. W.: In the law-breaking in which you have taken part, Mr. Welchman, what would you say had been the motivating influence?

MR. W.: A desire to do the thing.

MR. BAKER: Very sound, very sound indeed!

MR. W.: What particular law infractions have you enjoyed most?

MR. W.: That would be difficult to say, Mr. Wickersham. Sometimes I like one, sometimes another. It all depends on how I happen to be feeling, and on the weather. In summer, for instance, I am rather partial to violating Article 4, Section 6 of the Criminal Code of New York State, but that is because I feel the heat so terribly. In winter I like to devote myself to the Constitutional amendments, although as yet I have never prevented a Negro from voting.

MR. BAKER: They tell me that's a lot of fun.

MR. W.: No doubt it is. I am going in for that next year if I can ever get the rest of the amendments cleaned up. I haven't yet really denied a writ of habeas corpus, although I tell my friends that I have.

MR. W.: That does not properly fall in the class of amendments, Mr. Welchman. That is a part of the original Constitution.

MR. W.: I do not allow myself to quibble,

Mr. Wickersham. If a thing is a law, it is a law, whether it is technically an amendment, a part of the original Constitution, or a city ordinance.

MR. BAKER: Very sound, Mr. Welchman.

MR. W.: Do you not feel, Mr. Welchman, that in violating all these laws you are undermining society?

MR. W.: Yes, indeed, Mr. Wickersham. I certainly hope so.

MR. W.: What is your favorite color?

MR. W.: I am a great hand for blue. It makes my eyes look blue.

MR. W.: Are there any other questions?

MR. W.: You ought to know.

MR. W.: This has been very pleasant, Mr. Welchman. You must come and see *us* some time.

MR. W.: I won't hear of your going until you have had some cookies and milk. The cookies are right out of the oven.

DEAN POUND: M-m-m-m-m-m.

MR. W.: Now you just sit right here on the

porch and eat these and let me get a snapshot of you.

(*The commission groups itself on the steps, holding cookies and milk, while Mr. Welchman gets his kodak and snaps them. The investigation then adjourns*, sine die.)

FRENCH NEWS

IN READING French newspapers there is always one consolation: no matter how little of the meaning you are able to get, you aren't missing a thing. News is the last thing a French editor worries about. Even when he finds himself saddled with a real news-story, he doesn't know what to do with it, and will just as likely as not run in on page 7 among the *Petites Annonces*. He can take the story of an Atlantic flight or a cabinet crisis and undress it until it looks like something in the Special Westchester Section of the Sunday *Times*. There is always plenty to read in a French newspaper, but it doesn't make any difference whether you read it or not.

The attitude of the French press towards news is shown by the fact that most French papers run the latest dispatches on the third page under a vague departmental heading

like *"Dernière Heure"* or *"Dernières Nouvelles."* The front page they save for their essays.

The left-hand column of the front page is usually given over to a red-hot story called something like: "Molière During the Middle Period of His Productivity." The right-hand column is probably a signed outburst by the owner of the paper urging the restoration of the Bourbons or calling attention to the drought in what the French persist in calling *"Tchécoslovaquie."* In the middle of the front page the eager reader may devour biographical sketches of the bicyclists who are engaging in the *"Tour de France"* and who are now just passing through Toulon. And inside, on page 3, all nestled together in little two-line dispatches, will be the brief announcements that China is on fire and that a tunnel has been found already built under the English Channel.

All summer *Le Matin* has been giving over the two right-hand columns of its front page to a series called "My Fishing Trip in New-

foundland." This has been illustrated copiously each day with photographs taken by the author, reproduced by means of cuts such as only French newspaper-engravers can make, presumably etched on pieces of bread. The date line on the most recent installment was April 30. (I read the first two or three laboring under a slight misapprehension owing to the word for "to fish" being the same as the word for "to sin" and hoping that someone had gone to Newfoundland on a "campaign of sinning." You couldn't have told from the pictures whether it was sinning or fishing the author was engaged in.)

But no matter what page you look at in a French paper, you will find America mentioned. Even the front-page essays on Rousseau manage to slip in a paragraph or two taking a crack at Oncle Sam. The ratification of the *dettes* has, of course, been the chief topic of comment, and from *L'Humanité* to *L'Écho de Paris* the general attitude toward the United States is one of boiling rage. Practically the only general news-notes from

America that French papers will play up are those dealing with torch-murders, flag-pole-sittings and the extreme heat. It was, therefore, with considerable surprise that we saw a headline on the front page of *L'Écho de Paris* reading *"Un Grand Américain,"* but it turned out to be a tribute to Theodore Roosevelt and a lament that America had strayed so far from his teachings.

As near as we could detect, there was no mention made in the French press of the recently disclosed fact that American tourists paid over twice as much money into France last year as France paid to the United States. Well, they can't be expected to print everything.

In one department, however, the newspapers here excel, and that is in the reporting of crime. They love it. Crimes of violence which American papers would hardly think worth a stick of type are written up by the French with a zest and thoroughness which make of each one a special case in criminology. This is not because crimes are less fre-

quent in France than in America, for such papers as *Le Petit Marseillais*, after a perfunctory story on how the debts and the bicycle-tour are coming on, settle down each day to five or six solid pages of murder, arson, sex and robbery which apparently have been occupying the time of the entire citizenry the day before.

Even the most modest of crimes is treated in the Edgar Wallace manner, and it makes fascinating reading. Instead of, as in American accounts, beginning with the names and addresses of the policemen who discovered the crime, your French re-write man gets into a dressing-gown, lights his pipe and lets himself go like this (in rough translation):

"Toward 21 o'clock on the night of August 2, in the dark which resulted from there being no moon, Mme. Marie Plissy was walking toward her little shop in the rue Fourteenth-of-October when she suddenly found herself beaten down on the neck, falling dead at almost the same time. One is mystified."

Or even in more tantalizing fashion, under

the mysterious headline "The Amorous Refusals," we are led on like this by *Le Petit Journal*: "André Gerome, 24 years, electrician, had known, for about four years, when he was a subaltern in the 2nd regiment of infantry, a young girl, Claudia Poncet, who had, at that epoch, 15 years and lived at the home of her parents, 15 rue Saint-Hippolyte."

Well, anything might be going to happen, you must admit. So we read on: "On his liberation, the young officer wished to become engaged and rendered a visit to the parents of the young Claudia who refused to give their consent. In order not to be disagreeable to her parents, Mlle. Poncet wished to romp (probably not the meaning of *rompre*, but good enough) and accepted a later rendezvous."

The rest of the story is really too sordid, but suffice it to say that when a M. Grafouillère came to knock on the door, he found that Mlle. Claudia had ceased to live owing to having received three balls in the chest and neck.

This will give you some idea of how things are going in sunny France and if one hasn't time to read *all* the stories of sudden death and crime one may take that excellent paper, *L'Éclaireur de Nice et du Sud-Est,* and turn to page 3 where, under the general heading of *Nouvelles Diverses*, one finds, in summary, that at Aix an infant of five years drowns itself in a basin, at Lisieux a grandmother is killed with a hatchet for her money, that at Les Baux two lovers are shot by a jealous, and that in Orange a little boy sets fire to the mayor (possibly a slipshod translation, but that's what it looks like).

Of all French papers *Le Temps* seems to be the dullest, having a makeup such as would be effected by spreading two pages of the Congressional Record out side by side and doubling the length of their columns. This unexciting layout is not enhanced in the least by a department which fills the right-hand column under the dreary heading: *"La Vie à Londres."* There are no accounts of *crimes passionnels* in *Le Temps* and not even that

concession to fresh air which most French newspapers make under the title *"La Vie Sportive."* If we were to recommend a paper *not* to buy for general reading it would be *Le Temps*, followed closely by *Le Figaro*. Compared with them our own New York *Times* is a tabloid. (Incidentally, our own New York *Times,* even ten days late, comes with all the excitement of the monthly installments of "The Hound of the Baskervilles" when it was running serially in the *Strand Magazine*. We are sorry for anything we ever said disrespectfully of the New York *Times*.) Day in and day out *Le Matin* and *Le Quotidien* give the best imitation of real newspapers, although even they would deceive nobody. *Le Quotidien,* in the issue which has just come hot from the presses, bears a two-column scarehead on the front page biting out the following terse announcement, so that he who runs may read: *"La France Se Flattait Naguère de Posséder le Système Électoral le plus Large qui eût Jamais Existé. Va-t-elle Aujourd'hui Rester le Seul Pays où les Fem-*

mes ne Votent pas?" Not only do French headlines not tell you anything. They must even ask questions.

We can not bring this scholarly summary of French journalism to a close, however, without commending the theatrical newspaper *Comoedia* as being the best of its kind we have ever seen. It appears daily, and, although it, too, devotes its front page to gentlemen's essays on classical subjects and the reproduction of a painting of some old master, its inside pages are as handy a guide to what is going on in the theatre world of Paris as newspaper skill could devise. Every theatre is listed, with address, telephone number, name of current attraction and the names of the cast. If it were not for this department we should never have known that a cinema called *"Le Chanteur de Jazz"* with *"la grande vedette du film parlant Al Jolson"* is playing at the Aubert-Palace, or that at the Casino de Paris one is able to see *"Les 16 Smart Boys."*

EIGHT O'CLOCK SHARP

SEVERAL of my young friends (I make friends easily and of all ages) have recently received a questionnaire from the Junior League and the Parents' League designed to bring them to their senses in the matter of tardiness at parties. The idea seems to be that, with people arriving later and later at dinners and dances, the hour of breaking-up is gradually being extended so far into the forenoon of the following day that it cuts in on business conferences and dentist appointments. If

guests would arrive at a party on time, they could get it over with and be at home and in the general direction of the bed at a reasonable hour. (If *any* hour can be said to be reasonable.)

Evidently the Junior League and the Parents' League don't care whether I am late to parties or not for they didn't send me a questionnaire. But I am going to answer one anyway, and perhaps from the replies of a man who has been later to more parties than anyone since Charlie Ross (so late, in fact, that many times I have not arrived at all) they may find the solution to their problem.

The first question is: "Are you in favor of dining on time?" This is a little abstruse. There could be no *objection* to dining on time if dinner were served on time, whatever "on time" may mean. Once in a while, especially during the first week after daylight-saving has gone out of effect and I have forgotten to change my watch, I arrive at dinner approximately at the appointed time. What is the result? I am met at the door by a man who

hasn't quite finished buttoning his waistcoat and who looks at me with ill-concealed suspicion, the supposition being that anyone arriving so early is either drunk or a reporter. My hat and coat are laid out in solitary state on the hall-catafalque and I am ushered upstairs into the library for half an hour with "The Rise and Fall of Robespierre" and several brisk turns around the room. My host calls from upstairs that he will be "right down" and for me to "make myself at home." This I proceed to do by dropping off into a restless sleep until I am awakened by the tinkling of ice.

The cocktail problem for the guest who has arrived "on time" is no mean one. If you are the first guest to arrive (as you will be if you are "on time") and if you begin drinking cocktails with the first brewing, stringing along with the field as the others arrive, by the time the really late ones have come you are not only the most vivacious guest in the room—you are the host. You do the greeting; you insist on passing the canapés (or what

you yourself have left of the canapés exclusive of the powdered egg which has been shed on the rug); you comment on the attire of recent arrivals, and say: "I didn't catch the name" when introduced. In short, you are easily three laps ahead of anyone present except your host (who has been told beforehand by his wife to take it easy) and with your little elfin ways and cute sayings, you endear yourself to one and all and creep into every heart. Thus, before dinner has even commenced, it is your bedtime. This is what comes of arriving at the appointed hour.

Which, in a way, disposes of Question No. 2: "Will you arrive punctually at the hour set?" The answer is "No!"

Question No. 3 is: "Will you get to dances on time?" I am very lucky if I get to dances at all. There is something about the lateness of the hour at which a dance is supposed to begin that makes it rather a nebulous and eerie appointment at best. I can get dressed earlier in the evening with every intention of going to a dance at midnight, but some-

how after the theatre the thing to do seems to be either to go to bed or sit around somewhere. It doesn't seem possible that somewhere people can be *expecting* you at an hour like that. Only pixies and banshees have definite midnight appointments, and those are usually on a cabbage-leaf or around the stamen of a blue-bell. Perhaps this vagueness in my mind about dance-dates is a defence mechanism on my part, for I am not a devotee of dancing. Possibly the best way for me to help the Junior League in this particular department of their campaign would be not to *accept* any dance invitations. Then I won't hold things up.

Question No. 4 is: "If you accept a dinner invitation will you really attend?" My answer to this would be: "Well, I will and I won't." It seems like a fair question, however. Somebody has got to know, in order to get the squabs straight, how many people are going to be there, and the best way to find out is to come right out and ask the question point-blank: "If you accept, will you really at-

tend?" My reply, however, is complicated by the fact that I lose addresses and that a great many people have recently gone in for the unpleasant habit of not having their names in

the telephone book. I have spent many a dinner hour, beautifully groomed, standing in a United Cigar store thumbing over the adhesive pages of a telephone directory with no possible way of finding out where I am supposed to be, short of discovering what I did

with the little piece of blotting paper on which I originally wrote the address.

Then, too, before I can say definitely whether or not I will really attend a dinner, I must know about the weather. I am a very poor woodsman, and sometimes great storms come sweeping through the forest which separates my little house from the rest of civilization and I may wander about for weeks before striking the trail. Only last week I started out for a dinner party and, when I was half way through the woods, a driving blizzard came up, trees crashed about me, the winds howled and forced me back and I could not even see the moss on the trees to tell which was north. Naturally, I didn't get to the dinner, but it was a thing which could not have been foreseen. The question, as phrased, is therefore out of order.

The next question is: "Are you in favor of early luncheons?" My reply to this is that I am not in favor of luncheons at all.

This, in a way, clears up my attitude on the subject. I see no way out of the present situa-

tion. Parties can not arbitrarily be stopped in time for morning dentist appointments. We aren't living in Russia, you know. The only other course is to have your business and dentist appointments in the afternoon—and that, in turn, will make you late for dinner again. It is a vicious circle, but pleasantly vicious. Let's just let things go on as they are until a general breakdown sets in. That will be plenty of time to stop.

FOOTBALL RULES OR WHATEVER THEY ARE

How many of my little readers remember the day when a perfectly ordinary citizen could watch a football game and know what was going on? Rather than wait for an answer to this question, which would have to be obtained by a post-card ballot and might take months, I will make a stab at the answer and venture to say that it is only the older boys who remember. For during the last 10 years the Football Rules Committee has seen to it

that no one who understood the game the year before should understand it this year. The motto of the Rules Committee seems to have been: "New rules and new rooters each year."

In the old days, when they changed the rules maybe once every 10 years, watching football was something of a pastime. You took your seat in the stands and, provided you knew anything at all about the game, you followed the plays as they were executed and knew at least which side had the ball and what their general line of attack was. Oftentimes you knew enough about the game to yell suggestions to the quarterback or to tell the man next to you where the boys would have done well to try rushing on the third down. (If you did do this, however, you are not alive today—not if the man next you was I.)

It wasn't so bad when they began tampering with the number of downs to go 10 yards in. It was confusing at first, but they let you alone and didn't try to rattle you by changing

it again the next year, and before long you got to liking the four downs to 10 yards better than the old way. I sometimes wonder how we ever got along with the old way, but I suppose it was all right for that period, what with gas lights and everything. But I certainly should resent any move to go back to the old number of downs, although, for all I know now, they *have* gone back to them. The spectator would never know.

For after the war the Rules Committee began to get jittery. They acted as if they thought somebody was following them. First they would put on a beard, then they would take it off and walk on their hands, then they would duck around a corner and then appear walking very tall. They changed rules every season as if they were trying to work up a new game out of football and make it into something they didn't quite know about. They made illegal all the old plays that used to be the essence of the game and sat up nights trying to think up new things to put in their places. It has got so now that the

Rules Committee itself is about the only body of men who know enough about the game to play it, and they haven't anybody to play it with.

The freshman teams, or better the prep-school teams, who learn the game for the first time each year, have the drop on veterans, for they don't have to forget anything that they learned the year before. A senior, who has been taught all his life to pick up a fumble and run with it, suddenly finds that he can't do this, but must, when an opponent drops the ball, place his right hand to his mouth and call out "Co-e-e-e!" until a substitute quarter runs out from the side lines and shoots the ball with a revolver. This naturally confuses the senior. What it does to the spectators in the stands can be judged by the way they instinctively jump up and yell "Fumble!" only to sink back a second later and go back to reading the program.

All that the spectator gets out of a game now is the fresh air, the comical articles in his program, the sight of 22 young men

rushing about in mysterious formations, and whatever he brought along in his flask. The murmur which you hear running through the

stands after each play is caused by people asking other people what the idea of that was and other people trying to explain.

The thing to do is to change the rules for good and all this winter and then let us take

a couple of years to learn them. It is this dribbling along, a couple of changes this year and a couple more next, which is driving us old boys crazy. I would suggest the following outline of rule revisions for the year 1931 along the lines of the changes to date, this revision to stand for 10 years or until the game has been discontinued entirely.

Early Season Rules

(September 22 to October 6)

1. Only the quarterback shall be allowed to carry the ball and he shall run only when there is nobody after him. At other times he shall walk, dribbling the ball as in basket ball. He must keep whistling at all times.

2. A touchdown shall be considered made when the quarterback has placed the ball on the 55-yard line, with each team lined up on its own goal line. As soon as the quarterback shall have made a touchdown thus, he shall call out "Come out, come out, wherever you are, or else I'll catch you standing still!" At

this signal both teams shall run very fast and try to get to the opposite goal line without being tagged. A penalty of 10 points shall be accorded to the team making the touchdown.

3. A fumble shall count four points for the side making it, except in the following instances: (1) when made by a right guard (2) when made by a man in a white head guard (3) when made by a player who shall have first signalled to the referee indicating that he is about to fumble (4) when made by a professor who has got onto the field by mistake and can't find his way out.

Mid-Season Rules

(October 13 to November 3)

1. Only a left tackle shall be allowed to carry the ball, and he shall not weigh more than 190 pounds (with the ball). He need not whistle.

2. A touchdown shall be considered made when the left tackle shall have tossed the ball into a basket held on the 30-yard side line by

an assistant manager, who shall run to the coach with it and say: "Look! A ball in the basket!" A touchdown thus made shall count seven points, providing nine rahs are given.

3. When the ball is fumbled, nobody shall pay any attention to it at all, but another ball shall be brought out and put into play on the 10-yard line. If the old ball rolls into a pocket (there shall be four pockets dug into the field 20-yards apart on the side-lines) it counts 10 if it be in a 20-pocket, 20 if in a 10-pocket and 100 if in either of the booby-pockets.

Late-Season Rules

(November 10 to November 30)

1. Nobody at all shall be allowed to touch the ball with his hands, but it shall be kicked along with the right side of the ankle of the right foot. Any player may kick it but he must run to the referee and hold up two fingers, saying "Kick, sir?" The referee shall answer: "Please do."

2. There shall be no touchdowns, as such, and no scoring, as such. The side winning the game shall be the one which can prove that it has had the most exercise. After all, the game should be played for the game's sake, not to score points.

3. All spectators shall be blindfolded and made to sit with their backs to the field so that none shall peek. This will do away with overemphasis on football in college life and prevent the game from becoming a gigantic spectacle. It will also do away with graduate-domination. It may even do away with the graduates. The money hitherto furnished by the graduates can be made up by the sale of banners and arm bands to residents of the town in which the game is played.

With these new rules definitely in force, so that the spectators will know what to expect each year, they can make their own plans for Saturday afternoons during October and November.

And probably, at that, the stands will be crowded.

"GO DOWN, SWEET JORDAN"

THERE used to be a time when four Negroes could get together and tear off a little ripe harmony and nobody thought anything of it except that it sounded great. Now, since spirituals have been taken up socially, you have got to know counterpoint and the "History of the Key of Four Flats" in order really to appreciate them.

What used to be just plain "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" in the old brown book of college songs, along with "Seeing Nellie Home" and "Clementine," is now a manifestation of the growth of the Chariot Motif from the ancient African tap-dance through the muted eight-note into assonance and dissonance. And over your ears.

Having heard and read so much about the history of the Negro spiritual, I have been moved to look into the matter myself and

have unearthed a large block of data which I am going to work into a book, to be called *The Legal Aspects of the Negro Spiritual.* It will take up the little-known origins of the spiritual in Africa and bring it right down to the present day, or rather to December 5, when the book will come out (and go in again after seeing its own shadow).

Commentators and experts on the spiritual do not seem to realize that this particular form of harmony comes from the old African "vegetable-humming," dating back to the early seventeenth century and perhaps later. "Vegetable-humming" or *blakawa* was a chant taken part in by certain members of the tribe who wished they were vegetables and who thought that by humming loudly enough (with the tenor carrying the air) the God of the Harvest would turn them into vegetables and they could get their wish. There is no case on record of any one of them ever having been turned into a vegetable, but they kept on humming just the same, and it

is in this strange form of religious ecstasy that the spiritual as we know it had its origin.

Let us take, for example, the spiritual, "Roll Down Jordan, Roll Up de Lord." This is one of the best songs for our purpose, as it contains the particular harmonic combinations which are also found in the "vegetable-humming," that is, C, G-sharp, A, and E, sliding up very wickedly into D-flat, G-natural, B-flat, and E-sharp. In case the G-sharp slips a little too much and gets into H, the singer must open his mouth very wide but stop making sounds altogether.

The first verse to "Roll Down Jordan, Roll Up de Lord" goes:

"Roll down Jordan; roll up de Lord;
Roll down Jordan; roll up de Lord;
Roll down Jordan; roll up de Lord;
Roll down Jordan; roll up de Lord!

We then find the whole spirit of the thing changing and the evangelical note so common among Africans creeping into the second verse:

"Roll down de Lord; roll up Jordan;
Roll down de Lord; roll up Jordan;
Roll down de Lord; roll up Jordan;
Roll down de Lord; roll up Jordan;
Hey-hey!"

Thus, you will see, does the modern chant derive from the old wheat-cake dance, which in its turn, derived from Chicago to Elkhart in four hours (baby talk). In this dance we seem to see the native women filing into the market-place in the early morning to offer up their prayer to the God of Corn on the Cob for better and more edible crops ("O God of the Harvest! Give us some corn that we can eat. That last was terrible! Amen"). The dance itself was taken part in by the local virgins and such young men of the tribe as were willing to be seen out with them. They marched once around the market-place beating drums until someone told them to shut up. Then they seated themselves in a semicircle, facing inward, and rocked back and

forth, back and forth. This made some of them sick and they had to be led out. The rest sat there rocking and crooning until they were eighteen years old, at which time they all got up and went home, pretty sore at themselves for having wasted so much time.

We have now seen how the old tribes handled the problem of what to sing and how to prevent people from singing it. The slave trade, bringing these Negroes and their descendants over to America, foisted the problem on the United States. For a long time, owing to the colored people not knowing that they were developing a national folk song, nothing was done about it. The Negroes just sat around on pieces of corn-pone and tried out various kinds of swipes which they aggravated by the use of the banjo. One of the favorite songs of this era ran thus:

(*Basses*) M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m.
(*Tenors*) M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m.
(*First tenor solo*) M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m.

(*Second tenor solo*)
M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m.
(*Unison*) Comin' fer to carry me home.

Under this ran the banjo accompaniment something like this:

Plunky-plunky-plunky-plunky,
Plunky-plunky-plunky-plunky,
Plunky-plunky-plunky-plunky,
Plunky-plunky-plunky-plunky,
Plunk!

Here we find for the first time some evidence of the spirit of the whole race stirring in its captivity. We seem to see the women filing into the market-place in the early morning to raise their prayer to the God of the Harvest—I guess that goes with the other song.

Gradually, during the Reconstruction Period following the Civil War, carpetbaggers from the North came in and organized these singing groups into glee-clubs, each with a leader and white gloves. They taught

the basses to sing "Zum-zum-zum-zum" instead of "M-m-m-m-m-m-m" and wrote extra verses to many of the numbers to be sung as encores. The colored people didn't know what to make of all this and many of them stopped singing entirely and went in for tap-dancing. But the popularization of the Negro spiritual was on its way and special writers were assigned to the job of making up words which would sound rather native and yet would tell a story. It was found that only four words were needed for each song, as they were always repeated. Thus we have the growth of such songs as "Carryin' de Clouds on Jehovah's Back," "Ain't Gwine ter Pray fer de Old Black Roan," and "Ramona." The growth of the narrative in such songs can be traced in the following, entitled "All God's Fish is A-comin' Home":

"Oh, I went fer ter see de lightnin',
Oh, I went fer ter see de lightnin',
Oh, I went fer ter see de lightnin',
But de lightnin' warn't ter home.

"Oh, I went fer ter see de thunder,
Oh, I went fer ter see de thunder,
Oh, I went fer ter see de thunder,
But de thunder warn't ter home.

"Oh, I went fer ter see de rain (pronounced 'ray-un'),
Oh, I went fer ter see de rain,
Oh, I went fer ter see de rain,
But de rain warn't ter home."

And so on the song goes, with the singer going to see, in rapid succession, the fog, the light mist, the snow, the oysters, the river, Lake Placid, the man about coming to carry away the ashes, and finally the Lord, none of them being at home except the Lord and he was busy.

This marks the final development of the spiritual as a regenerative force and also marks the point at which I give up. I would, however, like to hear four good colored singers again without having to put my glasses on to follow the libretto.

"ONE MINUTE PLEASE!"

I AM known as a bad business man from one end of the country to just a little beyond the same end. Practically every one in my class in kindergarten went into business after graduation, and when I say business I mean business. Whenever I see them now they are always dressed up in stiff shirts and are making marks on the backs of envelopes. Get me a hundred of my old schoolmates together and let them talk from 9 A. M. until almost dinner time and I won't understand a word they are saying. It is only around dinner time that I begin to catch a glimmer of sense and then they have to come right out and say "Martini" or "Green turtle soup." At this point I join the party.

But not until I have had it said to me eight or a dozen times that I ought to be more businesslike. "Good old Bob," they say (those of

them who remember that my name is "Bob"), "you are just a sucker to be so impractical. Why don't you let us take some of your money and triple it for you?"

Leaving aside the question "What money?" I am frankly at a loss for something to say. Here I am, just a dreamer, and there they are, captains of industry, or, at any rate, second lieutenants. They have the advantage of me.

Of course, if I wanted to, I might point out that out of a possible $5000 which I have made since I left school I have had $3000 worth of good food (all of which has gone into making bone and muscle and some nice fat), $1500 worth of theatre tickets, and $500 worth of candy; whereas many of my business friends have simply had $5000 worth of whatever that stock was which got so yellow along about last November.

I was sympathetic with all the boys at that time and even advanced a little cash in a sparing manner, but I couldn't help remembering the days during the summer when I had to sit and listen to them say: "Well, I

made $650,000 over the week-end. What will you have, Bob, old man?" And all the time I was, in my old impractical way, sinking my money into silk neckties (which I still have) and throwing it away on life-giving beefsteaks.

I do not intend to dwell on this phase of life's whirligig, however. Who can tell, perhaps some day even we spendthrifts may find ourselves short of cash. In the meantime, those of us who have nothing but fripperies to show for our money have had a good laugh. At least we've got the fripperies.

What I do want to dwell on is the point that there are still a great many practices which are considered businesslike and efficient and which any one of us old dreamers could improve upon and speed up. Now you sit still and read this. I have sat still and listened to you long enough.

First, there is the question of business telephoning. During the last five or six years there has spread throughout the business world a method of telephoning which, so far

as I am concerned, bids fair to destroy all channels of business communication. If it keeps up, I, for one, will go back to the old Indian runner and carrier pigeon methods. I won't stand for this another day. In fact, I stopped standing for it a year ago.

I refer to the delayed pass play, so popular among busy executives. In this play your busy executive, when he wants to get me on the telephone (why he should want to get me on the telephone is a mystery), says to his secretary: "Get me Mr. Benchley on the wire, Miss Whatney." You see, he hasn't got the time to get me himself, what with all those stocks he has to tend to; so he has Miss Whatney do it for him. So far, pretty good! Miss Whatney looks up my number in the book and gives it to the operator at the switchboard, thereby releasing the busy executive for other duties, such as biting off the end of a cigar or drawing circles on his scratch pad.

The scene now changes and we see me, the impractical dreamer, sitting at an old typewriter with nothing to do but finish an article

which was due the day before. My telephone rings and I, in my slipshod, impractical way, answer it. And what do I get for my pains?

"Is this Vanderbilt 0647? Is Mr. Benchley there? Just a minute, please!"

Having nothing to do but wool-gather, I wait. In about two minutes I hear another female voice saying: "Is this Mr. Benchley? Just a minute, please, Mr. Kleek wants to speak to you."

Remember, it is Mr. Kleek who is calling *me* up. I don't want to speak to Mr. Kleek. I wouldn't care if I never spoke to him. In fact, I am not sure that I know who Mr. Kleek is.

"Just a minute, please," comes the voice again. "Mr. Kleek is talking on another wire."

Now, fascinating as this information is, it really wasn't worth getting up out of my chair for. Mr. Kleek could be busy on eight other wires and my life would go on just about the same. Am I to be called away from my work to be told that a Mr. Kleek is talking

on another wire? I think this out as I stand there waiting.

Finally, after several minutes, I hear a man's voice.

"Hello," it says gruffly; "who is this?" I am not only to be told to wait until Mr. Kleek is ready to speak to me, but I am to be treated by Mr. Kleek as if I had infringed on his time. At this point I frankly flare up.

"Who is this yourself?" I snarl. "This was your idea, not mine!"

Then evidently Miss Whatney tells Mr. Kleek that she has got Mr. Benchley on the wire, and he is somewhat mollified. But I want to tell you, Mr. Kleek, that by that time I am not on the wire any longer and you can stick that telephone ear-piece into the side of your head. Furthermore, from now on, the minute I am called to the telephone and told to wait a minute, that Mr. Anybody wants to speak to me, I hang up so quickly that the hook drops off. If Mr. Kleek or any other busy executive wants to speak to me he can be there within four seconds after I answer or

he can put in the call again. I may be just an old wool-gatherer, but I want to gather my wool somewhere else than at a telephone receiver. And that goes for you, too, Mr. Andrew Mellon!

It is possible that the telephone has been responsible for more business inefficiency than any other agency except laudanum. It has such an air of pseudo efficiency about it that people feel efficient the minute they take the receiver off the hook. A business man could be talking with Ajax, the mechanical chess player, on the other end of the wire and still feel he was getting somewhere, simply because to any one passing the door he looks as if he were very busy. There is something about saying "O. K." and hanging up the receiver with a bang that kids a man into feeling that he has just pulled off a big deal, even if he has only called up central to find out the correct time. For this reason business men use the telephone exclusively when almost any other form of communication would be quicker.

In the old days when you wanted to get in touch with a man you wrote a note, sprinkled it with sand, and gave it to a man on horseback. It probably was delivered within half an hour, depending on how big a lunch the horse had had. But in these busy days of rush-rush-rush, it sometimes is a week before you can catch your man on the telephone. The call is put in, but he is out. You tell your secretary to keep calling, but, if the man takes any kind of care of himself at all, he is out most all day in the fresh air. So day after day the secretary keeps calling and, in this way, autumn turns into winter and winter to spring. Perhaps you never get him.

A busy executive said to me the other day in an exasperated tone: "Aren't you ever in? I have been trying to get you on the telephone for five days. What do you do with your time, cut lawns?" You see, I am the one who was in the wrong. I was the impractical one.

I might have told him about that new invention called the "typewriter," whereby, if you can't get a man on the telephone, you can

drop him a note which will reach him the next morning. Or I also might have told him that I was in my office all the time, but was so busy working that I had left word with the telephone operator not to bother me with time-wasting calls from business men. In either case, dropping me a note would have saved him four days of telephoning. But apparently note dropping is considered a relic of civil war days and is not to be considered in the bustle of modern business. You must use the telephone, even if it doesn't get you anywhere.

The telephone is the particular pet of the go-getter who won't take no for an answer. He has a passion for long-distance calls. Let us say that his organization is getting up a dinner in Chicago and wants to get an after-dinner speaker from New York. The go-getter is, of course, chairman of the dinner committee because he gets things done. He guarantees to get the New York speaker. "Leave it to me," he says, knowingly. And, even as he says it, he is putting in a long-

distance call for New York. Bingo—like that! The New York man answers and gets the following:

"This is Ferley of the Autumn Coat and Suit speaking! We're holding a dinner here on Feb. 10, and you're coming out to speak for us!—O, yes, you are! I won't take 'no' for an answer. . . . O, yes, you can—I'll call those people up and tell them you's coming to us. . . . Now, not another word!—See you on the 10th!"

With this he hangs up and reports to the committee that he has the speaker sewed up. The fact that the New York man can't go to Chicago on the 10th and has no intention of going doesn't enter into the calculations at all. No one is supposed to be able to resist the man with the telephone personality. He sweeps everything before him.

The only drawback is that, two days before the dinner, when it is found out that the New York speaker meant what he said and really isn't coming, the go-getter has to go-get somebody through a local agency to do card tricks

for the diners. "That's the trouble with dealing with these literary guys," he thunders. "You can't count on them!" And he puts in another long-distance call just to quiet his nerves.

And so it goes through life. There are the doers and the dreamers, the men who make every second count and the men who waste their time with nothing to show for it. The first are the business men of the country, the others are the impractical fellows who write and draw pictures. Or perhaps it is just the other way round. I always get these things mixed.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PARLEY

AMONG the countless phases of international diplomacy which confuse me, I am perhaps most in the dark concerning what are known as "parleys." I take it for granted that the word comes from the French "to talk" (and a very smart choice of word it was, too), although there are times when it might well have been derived from the name of a certain well-known method of betting on the horses. But knowing what the word "parley" means, doesn't help much in finding out what goes on at a parley.

There have been a lot of parleys lately. I'll bet that, what with one parley and another, Herr Schlacht and M. Briand haven't eaten a home-cooked meal since last Spring. (Herr Schlacht's loss is probably the greater one. The French use too much lettuce in their home-cooked meals, although I suppose that

M. Briand has grown to like it by now and misses it just as much as Herr Schlacht does his *sauerbraten mit kartoffelen.*) Mr. MacDonald even takes a trip across the ocean for a little parley, and there is no telling where Mr. Snowden will be off to next. Mr. Snowden, however, is not an ideal parleyer and it is doubtful if he will be asked again. He hasn't enough imagination. You can't be a popular parley-master and just sit and say "No" all the time.

But what I can not picture to myself is what goes on at these parleys. I know what the papers say, and I read the speeches (or rather, I *used* to read the speeches until I discovered that they were all the same one) but somehow I feel that there *must* be something else that goes on at a parley, something that I don't know about.

Let us say that there is a brand new parley started at Omsk. Omsk has never had a parley, or at least not a very good one, and the hotel-managers there must be pretty cross about it. A town which has a parley must do

a great business in clean collars, because the thing always lasts so much longer than was expected that the delegates probably run short of clean collars in no time. Local movies also must pick up tremendously, as representatives of the smaller nations can't have much to do but go to the movies, unless they like golf. The representatives of the small nations ought to be pretty good golfers by now. Or perhaps they bring along a lot of good books and catch up on their reading.

Presumably the delegates know in a general way what they are going to do and say before they get off the train. They can't be expected to make it up as they go along. They must have talked it over with their fathers and mothers before they left home and have received some slight bit of instruction from *some*one.

"Listen, André," someone must have said, "don't let those boys bluff you. Lead them on to think that you are a little dumb, look stupid (and *that* will be no tough job for you, André, aha-hahaha!) but don't take a cent

under three billion. They've got it. They'd pay it to Jolson if he asked it and you make 'em pay it to you. . . . And if you get into a jam, just give me a ring. I'm in the book."

Something like that must have gone on before the delegates left home, either from the Prime Minister or the majority leader in Parliament or the wife, or perhaps all three. You can't tell me that they land in Omsk without notes or without strings tied around their fingers. All this stuff we read in the papers can't be ad-lib.

All right then—what is the first thing they say when they get together in private conference? Let us say that they go to their rooms in the hotel, wash up, and go down to dinner. They meet in the lobby and are introduced.

"I guess you know Herr Naumgratz," says the interpreter. "Herr Naumgratz, Monsieur Dabard."

"We met at the Hague," says Herr Naumgratz (those boys ought to know each other pretty well by now. They have practically been room-mates ever since the war). "How

are you? Did you catch that train that afternoon?"

"Bien sur!" says M. Dabard. "I had to wait in the station for fifteen minutes. That's the last time I'll ever run for a train. How have things been going by you?"

"I can't complain, and, what's more, I *won't* complain," replies Herr N. "Well, if here isn't old Wiczski, the Strong Silent Man of Poland! *Wie geht's,* Wiczki?"

And so it goes until they are all together again and maybe have had a couple of aperatives and told three or four stories. And right here is where I begin to wonder. What do they do and say next? They presumably don't go right into their speech routines. They have what are known as "preliminary conferences." What happens at a preliminary conference?

My guess is that they line up the schedule and rehearse. "Well, what is it we're parleying on this time?" one may say. "Let's get it straight before we begin."

"You ought to know," says another. "Your

Prime Minister called the conference. Didn't he tell *you*?"

"Sure he told me," replies M. Litvy, "but you don't suppose I'm going to tell everything I know right off the bat, do you? What do *you* think the subject of the parley is?"

"The reduction of armed reserves?" suggests Herr Naumgratz.

"You're crazy!" says M. Litvy. "We took that up at our last meeting."

"Naval parity?" offers another.

"You're getting warm."

"Say," interposes the delegate from what used to be Bosnia, "if this is a conference on naval parity, *I'm* not going to stick around any longer. We got no navy." And he picks up his hat and stick.

"You stay right where you are, Erlic," orders the French representative. "We need you for a quorum. And besides, you dress up the picture with that monocle and high collar."

It is finally decided that the subject of the

conference is how much coal warships are going to be allowed to carry during a war.

"I thought there wasn't going to be any more war," says a timid little man from Greece.

"That comes later," says M. Dabard, "it will be time enough to stop war when we have decided how much coal warships can carry in case there *is* a war. We can't do everything at once, can we?"

M. Dabard then continues: "Now who is going to say what? Let's get this thing lined up. Who wants to speak first at the meeting tomorrow?"

Nobody wants to speak first. It is bad diplomacy. You must wait until the other fellow has spoken and then you will know which side to take.

"I'll tell you what," suggests M. Litvy. "I'll make a speech of welcome first. That can't do any harm."

"Can't do any *harm*?" says Herr Naumgratz. "It can bore the living life out of *me*, that's the harm it can do."

"You don't have to come in until it's over, do you?" retorts M. Litvy. "You don't have to come in at all, for that matter."

"Boys, boys!" says Mr. Ditheredge. "We'll never get anywhere if we go on like this. I'll tell you what let's do. Litvy can make his speech of welcome, but make it short. Just say 'Welcome to Omsk,' Litvy, and then sit down. Then I'll follow and say that all that England asks is that her warships be allowed to carry enough coal to get them out and back."

"Out where and back?" asks Herr Naumgratz.

"What does it matter?" replies Mr. Ditheredge. "Out to wherever they're going."

"*I* was planning to say that in behalf of France," interposes M. Dabard. "Can't you say something else?"

"I'll tell you what you can say," suggests Mr. Ditheredge. "You say that all that France thinks is necessary for England is enough coal to get *out* with. That will get a laugh."

"All right, I'll say that then," agrees M. Dabard. "Anything for a laugh, I suppose."

"Then I would like to speak," says Herr Naumgratz, "and say that Germany needs more coal than the rest because it gets so chilly up there in the North Sea."

"Did you ever spend a week-end at an English Channel resort?" asks Mr. Ditheredge. "Chilly? Boy, you don't know what chilly is!"

"What time is it?" asks the representative of what used to be Bosnia.

"What do *you* care?" retorts the French delegate. "You've got no dates."

"I just wanted to know," says the Bosnian.

"You go back to your Canfield," says Mr. Ditheredge. "You'll get out in time for your movie, don't worry."

It is finally decided that Mr. Ditheredge will speak first, then M. Dabard will get his big laugh on the "just-enough-to-get-out" line, then Herr Naumgratz will tell about how cold it is in the North Sea and Dr. Lumson will tell what he did on his vacation. That will conclude the first day's meeting.

Now, of course, I know nothing of what really goes on at these preliminary conferences. I may be all wrong in my guess. But there *must* be some sort of getting-together beforehand, especially when you consider that most of them are speaking different languages and have to be interpreted to each other. I have always thought that it would be kind of fun to be an interpreter at one of those affairs and interpret it all wrong. When, for instance, the French delegate had said that France wants coal for cooking-purposes, the interpreter might say that he had said that the English delegate ought to know better than to wear a necktie like that at a public gathering and what was he doing with that cigarette-lighter.

This would help expedite the parley and bring it to a close a lot quicker. The general effect would be the same as it is now and they could get around to the next conference that much earlier.

WHAT TO READ AT SEA—IF ANYTHING

THE choice of books for whiling away the time on an ocean voyage is a question to which considerable thought should be given. One shouldn't rush off with the first three books that happen to be lying on the library-table as one leaves for the boat, neither should one rely on the generosity of friends to supply one with reading matter for the trip across. For no matter how many people send books to the boat, you are quite sure to find, on settling down to read the next day, that they are all copies of the same one. I think that book-store clerks do it on purpose.

An ocean voyage is a good time not only to get in a little light reading but to catch up with some of the books you never have quite got around to wading through on shore. So I would recommend, in addition to the current fiction success and the latest humorous

"steamer-book," of which you will have five copies each given to you, taking a copy of "The Life of Lord Morley" or "Aspects of International Diplomacy" or something good and meaty to give balance to your mental diet. You *might* read a couple of pages in one of them, who can tell?

On the first day out you will appear with three books under your arm and settle down in your chair. You bring three in case you finish one very quickly. It would be such a nuisance to have to keep running down to your cabin for fresh books as fast as you finish one. You wouldn't be surprised if you finished all three before lunch. So you begin on the popular fiction work.

The first page is easy-going and in no time you are on page 2. Then something happens. You take a look at the ocean as you turn the page. It is a funny thing about the ocean. Nobody ever took a quick look at it and turned right away again. You always look a little longer than you intended to. It isn't that you *see* anything. The waves all look about alike

and follow each other with considerable regularity. But they have a hypnotic quality which makes it possible to look at them for hours at a time without any good excuse. It is maybe five minutes before you get back to page 2 again.

Page 2 suddenly presents tremendous difficulties. You can't seem to get into it. There is too much type, in the first place, and somehow the author doesn't seem to have caught the knack of holding your attention. Before you know it your eyes are back on the ocean again, watching with fascination slight dipping of the horizon along the top of the rail. It's a funny thing, the ocean. All that water.

But come, come! This isn't reading! Let's skip page 2 and get over on to page 3. That's better. A lot of conversation. Not very good conversation, though. Let's see. " 'I am glad that you told me this before I had a chance to fall in love with you,' said Eunice, holding her spoon gingerly poised above her cup." Who was that who just walked past on the deck? You look up to see, although you are

sure it was no one you know, and on the way back to page 3 your eyes get caught in the ocean again. Five more minutes out.

"The Life of Lord Morley" has slipped off your lap onto the deck, but somehow that

doesn't make much difference. The current fiction success has your forefinger inserted between pages 2 and 3, but otherwise your contact with it has been broken. You have frankly given yourself over to an intense con-

templation of the sea and a half-hearted examination of everyone that walks past. You will do this for ten more minutes, you say to yourself, and then go back to your book. Perhaps "The Life of Lord Morley" would be good for a change. This fiction thing seems to be rather footless.

But before you have got around to opening "The Life of Lord Morley" the stewards have come around with bouillon and some of those hearty German sandwiches and there isn't much else to do but stack your three books up very neatly beside your chair and give yourself over to nourishment. A man has got to look out for his health, after all. And then, after eating, he certainly ought to take a turn around the deck or perhaps play a game of deck-tennis. He can't sit in his chair *all* day.

And here is where the books really fulfill their purpose. As they lie on the empty chair, waiting for their owner to come back to read them, they are the object of curious scrutiny by people walking by and those in neighboring chairs. There is always a great interest

displayed by passengers in what their fellows are reading—or leaving lying around on their chairs. People in the next chairs will walk past, tipping their heads to one side to see what the title of the book is, and, if they are sure that the owner is on another deck, will even take the book up and thumb its pages.

And from these books they judge the occupant of the chair.

Now, since it is pretty well understood that, so long as the ocean presents its distractions and so long as people keep walking past, you are not going to get much further than page 4 in any book you may take out on

deck, you might as well get credit among your neighbors for being an important person mentally. Don't leave a paper-covered copy of an Edgar Wallace book lying about. Pick a good one that will look impressive. I used a copy of "The Masters of Modern French Criticism" on my last trip and got quite a name for myself with it. I got about two pages read, but all the people on my side of the ship had me sized up as a serious thinker. Everything went all right until one night a man came up to me and said "I see you are reading Professor Babbitt's book on French Criticism. I would be interested to know what you think of it. I wrote a review of it for the *Nation* when it came out and I wonder if you find the same fault with it that I do." So I had to say that I really had just begun it (he must have seen it lying around for five days) and that I hadn't really formed any opinion on it yet. Eventually, I had to read the book in my berth at night, for he wouldn't let me go.

So it would be well to pick even more

esoteric works than that, in order not to get caught by someone who has already read them. The main point is, in all ocean reading, to take books which you don't have to read yourself.

PENGUIN PSYCHOLOGY

IT WOULD seem to be a good time for any animals who think themselves highly intelligent to drop into one of our larger colleges and see if there isn't a job there for them. At Columbia University they are crazy for cats who will take intelligence tests; at Yale a good smart monkey can draw down anywhere from $1 to $3 a day, and the Cornell medical college is making very attractive offers for rats to submit themselves to noise tests. An animal with any brains at all is simply a fool not to cash in on the psychological experimenting craze which is sweeping the academic world.

It isn't as if the animals had to be hurt or even fed unpleasant mixtures. The worst that can happen is that you may be frightened by a Cornell professor smashing a paper bag behind your back. The rats who are being used

to test the effect of noise on the nervous system may get awfully irritated, what with people rattling things in their ears and blowing whistles, but it is nothing that a good rest over the week-end will not fix up. The cats at Columbia have really nothing to do except step on little disks and open up doors leading to bowls of milk. The life of Reilly was a tough one compared to this. And the Yale monkeys not only are treated just like the other Yale men, but are even taken to Florida during the winter and given a time at Miami. So much attention has not been paid to animals' personal comfort since the time when they were paired off and given that junket on an ark. I am trying to keep the newspaper accounts of these collegiate opportunities from our cat, or she will get dissatisfied with home life and be off to the university to see if some professor can make her jump when he says "Boo!"

I cannot find out just what the college life of these animals is when they are not working in the "lab." Do they live in dormitories to-

gether or board around at houses in the town? I suppose that the Yale monkeys go in rather heavily for secret societies and are pretty manly, but the Columbia cats probably go home at night. As the Columbia investigators have found out that alley cats are the smartest of all (one, named Miss Audrey, can practically work a combination on a dial in order to get her bowl of milk) it would be pretty hard to keep them confined in a dormitory after classes. Now, when New Yorkers hear a great disturbance out in back of their apartments, they can lay it to a crowd of "those college cats" and write to the university authorities about it.

It seems, however, as if the academic investigators might find some kinds of animal which would approximate human beings a little more closely than cats and rats. (The Yale monkeys, of course, couldn't be better for the purpose.) I am taking it for granted that the experiments are for the ultimate purpose of applying the principles evolved to human beings and their mental problems.

There wouldn't be all this trouble just to pick out the smartest cat on One Hundred and Thirtieth street or the Ithacan rat who could stand the most hooting in his ear. And, since human beings are to be the final beneficiaries of all these experiments, why not take an animal which has more human characteristics than any other next to the monkey—the penguin? I could never understand the almost deliberate ignoring of the penguin in psychological experiments. The penguins themselves, I understand, feel very upset about it.

Any one who has ever watched a penguin will know what I mean. Nowhere in the animal kingdom will you find more human behavior. Slightly drunken human behavior, it is true, but very refined drunkenness. No scenes. No vulgarity. Just the bearing of a rather old colonel in a dinner jacket who had found himself at his club overtaken with a slight giddiness from too much port and is making his way to his cab with all the dignity at his command. If spoken to, he will stop for a second, focus slowly on the obtruder,

totter slightly, and then proceed, without so much as a word to indicate that he considers the interruption worthy of his notice. The penguin is the most patrician of all animals who resemble human beings, and it would not be a bad idea to get his consent to a few experiments to be applied to correspondingly patrician members of the human race. Not everybody is going to react. There are still a few gentlemen left in the world, thank Heaven!

I have made a few preliminary experiments with the penguins in the Bronx park zoo, and if Harvard University wants to use them as a basis for a penguin research department it can make the departments of Yale, Columbia and Cornell look pretty silly. I am afraid that Harvard is a little conservative for such advanced research work, however, and I am therefore making a simultaneous offer to the University of Wisconsin. I don't know how the Bronx penguins will feel about taking the trip to Wisconsin, but I should think that if we could get a private train with

a club car on it and plenty of Scotch for the journey, they might feel that it was worth their while. They would, of course, be put up at the homes of the faculty during their stay at Madison and would not be expected to attend teas or receptions.

My experiments with the penguins in Bronx park have been superficial but sympathetic. I have taken a book up to the pool around and in which they are accustomed to promenade and have simply engaged them in conversation, just as one gentleman to another. I would not say that they had met me half way, but several of them have accepted cigars (Corona-Coronas) and even a nip if proffered in a tall glass (no ice, please, and plain water), and have eventually condescended to answer a few questions after being assured that there were no reporters present.

One penguin in particular, a Col. MacKenzie of the 12th Penguin Guards, has been extremely gracious, and it is from him that I have collected most of my data. I do not dare

take notes while he is talking and so perhaps I have not got the thing exactly as he has said it, but I am sure that I have caught the gist as well as the spirit. He would be furious if he ever knew of this violation of his confidence, but, as he reads nothing but the London *Times*, and occasionally the New York *Herald-Tribune*, there is little chance that he will see it. I hope that none of you will be cads enough to go and tell him.

My idea was to discover the scientific effect of prohibition Scotch on brain cells accustomed to the genteel degeneration of the pre-war product (penguins, in their own homes, drink nothing but pre-war liquor), to test the reactions on a highly cultivated and refined mind of vulgar communistic political remarks and to see if penguins, and therefore members of the University or Union League clubs, have a sense of humor.

It took three conferences with Col. MacKenzie to effect my purpose. The first day I pretended to be reading by the pool and did not look up as he tottered by. This evidently

intrigued him. I had deliberately taken along a copy of Burke's tirade against the French revolution and held it so that the colonel could see the title. He stopped in front of me on his third lurch past and stood weaving from side to side trying to catch the name. Very slowly and carefully he took out a pair of nose glasses attached to a long black ribbon which hung across his immaculate shirt front and frankly stared.

"Very sound philosophy this," I said, looking up.

The colonel started to say something, but gave it up to hiccough slightly behind his flapper. He was not accustomed to speaking to strangers. Finally he gave in.

"I see you are a gentleman of the old school," he said, very deliberately and distinctly. "No rubbish. No bolshevism."

"No rubbish, no bolshevism, is my motto, sir," I replied. "I don't know what the world is coming to."

The colonel started to come over and continue the conversation, but slipped ever so

little on the wet stone and very nearly fell on his side. This distressed him terribly and he pretended that it was what he had intended to do all along.

"They keep this walk in shocking condition," he said, recovering himself with magnificent dignity. "Shocking condition. The board of governors shall hear of this."

I took out a flask containing some Scotch which I had bought in a drug store on the way up (with a doctor's prescription, of course).

"Could I tempt you, sir?" I asked. Knowing that no penguin would ever drink from a flask I had also brought along two tall glasses and a thermos of plain water. The old gentleman's eyes sparkled as I mixed him a highball. He tucked his glasses away inside his dress waistcoat and came unsteadily nearer.

"An outrage that gentlemen have to drink on the sly like this," he mumbled. "I myself am planning to spend the rest of my life in London. Have relatives there, you know."

I nodded, as if to say that, of course, the whole world knew of the MacKenzies of London, and handed him his glass. He waited until I had made one for myself (very deftly leaving out the Scotch) and raised the glass in military fashion to a point just two inches below his eye.

"The queen, sir!" he said.

"And your very good health, sir," I added.

Col. MacKenzie got his glass to his beak, but no further. The drug store Scotch assailed his patrician nostrils and he could go no further. In order not to hurt my feelings he took a very slight sip and then placed his glass down on the stone beside him. The first part of my experiment had failed miserably. How could I note the effect of prohibition alcohol on a highly sensitized mind if the subject would not drink it?

"New York is not what it used to be," I said sadly, trying another tack.

There was a long silence. I thought that maybe the colonel was offended by my having offered him an inferior grade of liquor.

He was weaving slowly in front of me and adjusting his dress tie. An outburst of rage was imminent, I feared. Perhaps an apoplexy. I tossed the contents of my glass into the pool to show him that I, too, had my standards.

"Vile stuff," I said. "I apologize for offering it to you. Now, in the old days, at the Cafe Martin or the Union Club ——"

I caught his eye to see if he was mollified. But, instead of rage burning there, I saw a film of tears. The old gentleman had broken down at the thought of the dear, dead days, and was on the point of an alcoholic fit of crying. Obviously, I could proceed no further with my tests today.

"Well, I am afraid that I must be going," I said quickly, to cover up his embarrassment. And, bowing deeply, I turned my back to leave.

"Good-by, young man," said the colonel, thickly. "Will you have dinner with me at my club one day? I have some rare old Bourbon. . . . I am most sorry for this display of emotion. . . . The old days, you

know . . . the old days." And with a hiccough and a bow deeper than mine which very nearly precipitated him on his head, Col. MacKenzie walked with military unsteadiness down the edge of the pool and joined his clubmates.

So you see I am in a position to get some very valuable scientific data from penguins if Harvard or Michigan is interested. The only trouble will be in keeping the colonel sober enough to react without crying.

NOW THAT YOU'RE TANNED—WHAT?

To THE casual crawler over rocks and beaches this summer, if he was at all social-minded, must have come the thought: "To what end all this epidermis-toasting? What is to become of all these sun-tanned backs when winter comes?" The entire Atlantic Coast, from Maine to September, as well as what Mirabeau called *"le bord de la mer"* of the Continent, has been outlined with a fringe of bodies lying prone in the sun patiently awaiting pigmentary alteration. If I were to be given one question on the subject it would be "And for what?"

It isn't as if the process were an easy one to undergo. If you are really going in for tanning every square inch of your body you have got to give yourself over to it as old Simeon Stylites gave himself over to flag-pole sitting. You have got to forswear your

friends, your comfort, your meals, and become a tanner. Anyone who has tried to engage a tanner in conversation during this period will realize that he or she might just as well be counted out as far as social intercourse goes. Even if they hear you, they won't answer, either because their mouths are too full of sand or their throats are resting on a rock or simply because they are concentrating so hard on absorbing every one of the sun's rays that they just don't care.

Then, too, there has come into play an added tanning agent in the form of unguents and oils of various kinds. These have to be applied before getting into the oven and some friend has to be called in to get the stuff well smeared over the small of the back. In places where sand is the geological basis, this process results in a general coating over the calves of the legs and elbows resembling that detected on children's chins in day-coaches after the oranges have been passed around. This coating is not washed off by bathing and has been known to stick until the salad course at

dinner that night. There are people who do not mind having small particles of sand on their elbows and the calves of their legs rubbing against their clothing. I, thank God, am not one of these, and none of my people before me have ever been.

As this article is dealing only with the personal discomfort to the tanners themselves, we will say nothing of the trails of oil on the surface of the water left by swimmers who have anointed themselves before entering, giving the place the appearance of a cove on the East River at Twenty-third Street. We *would* mention this, however, if we were taking up the effects of tanning on the community in general.

Very well, then. We have seen that a lot of people have been lying around on their stomachs and hips all summer, with their bathing suits pulled down and up, cut off from their friends, sustaining rock bruises and sand-rash, hurting their eyes and softening the backs of their necks, and all in order to change color on parts of their bodies

which, with civilization as petty as it is today, nobody is ever going to see.

Of course, the ladies can display their backs in evening gowns, but, with every woman in the room displaying a brown back, the excitement is going to be somewhat lessened. Even the economist's Theory of Conspicuous Waste will not work in this case, for a brown back is no sign that its owner has had the leisure to acquire it at the shore. She may have got it by fifteen minutes a day under a lamp or by the careful application of powder that very evening. In the early fall social affairs it is going to be the lady with the lily-white shoulders who is the sensation.

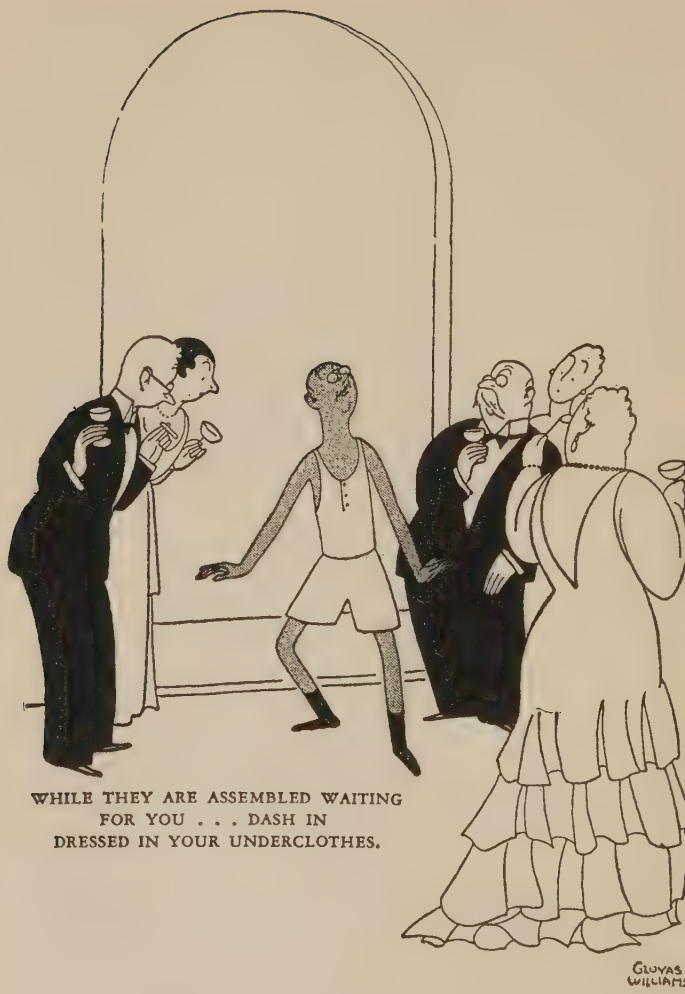
But it is the gentlemen who really should begin now to plan what they are going to do this fall to make up for all the trouble they took during the summer to change color. Aside from a certain pride in showing themselves on the beach and having ladies say, "Honestly, Jimmy, I thought from the back that you were a Negro," theirs must be a short-lived satisfaction. Presumably by Sep-

tember 20 they will all have their clothes on again, unless they demonstrate reducing-machines in drugstore windows for a living. At social functions they must appear in formal evening dress, eager to say to the young lady of their choice, "Would you like to see my back?," but prevented by such convention as still remains in polite society. As they look in their mirror each morning and watch the work of an entire summer blushing unseen and gradually fading away without causing even so much as an "O-o-o-h, how *brown* you are!," they are going to begrudge the hours they spent with their mouths in the sand or digging their hips into rocks just to do a Narcissus during the winter.

There are one or two ways in which young gentlemen with left-over tans can make use of them, but I am not sure whether or not they are practical. One would be to go to every dance during the winter dressed as a Greek slave and say, as you enter: "Oh, I thought it was to be fancy-dress!" Then, even

if you are put out, a lot of people will have seen you and remarked on how brown you are even though evidently stewed. After going to several dances like this, they may get used to you and let you come in and play around. Another would be to invite guests to your house to dinner and while they are assembled waiting for you to appear, dash in dressed in your underclothes, dashing right out again in simulated confusion, saying: "For Heaven's sake, why don't you let a fellow know you're here!" In case they might not have had time to see your tan, you can trip and fall, taking quite a time to get up. Or perhaps the best way of all would be, no matter where you are, just to say: "I would now like to show you the tan I got last summer" and simply take your clothes off to the point where it isn't funny any more.

Next summer, however, things will probably be different, and we shall see men and women sitting around under great umbrellas with draperies hung over their faces and



WHILE THEY ARE ASSEMBLED WAITING
FOR YOU . . . DASH IN
DRESSED IN YOUR UNDERCLOTHES.

bodies leaving just holes to see through. It won't make any difference to me either way, as I usually stay indoors during the summer anyway and very seldom take my clothes off in the winter.

SPORTING LIFE IN AMERICA: DOZING

WE AMERICANS are a hardy race, and hardy races need a lot of sleep. "Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care," Shakespeare has called it, and, except for the fact that it doesn't mean much, it is a pretty good simile. I often think of it myself just as I am dropping off into a light doze: "Sleep, that sleeves up the raveled care of . . . knit, that sleeps up the shaveled neeve of pfor—pff—prpf—orpffff" (*trailing off into a low whistle*).

One of the most charming manifestations of sleep which we, as a nation, indulge in as a pastime is the Doze. By the Doze I mean those little snatches of sleep which are caught now and then during the day, usually with the collar on and choking slightly, with the head inclined coyly to one side, during which there is a semiconscious attempt to appear as

if we were really awake. It is in this department of sleep that we are really at our best.

Of course, there is one form of doze which, to the casual observer or tourist, gives the appearance of legitimate sleep. This is the short doze, or "quickie," which is taken just after the main awakening in the morning. The alarm rings, or the Lord High Chamberlain taps us on the shoulder (in the absence of a chamberlain a relative will do. And right here I would like to offer for examination that type of sadistic relative who takes actual delight in awakening people. They hover about with ghoulish anticipation until the minute arrives when they may legitimately begin their dirty work, and then, leering unpleasantly, they shake the sleeper roughly with a "Come, come! Time to get up!" and wait right there until he is actually out on the cold floor in his bare feet. There is something radically wrong with such people, and the sooner they are exposed as pathological cases the better it will be for the world). I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be nasty about it.

At any rate, we are awakened and look at the clock. There are five minutes before it is absolutely necessary to get out of bed. If we leave shaving until night, there might even be fifteen minutes. If we leave dressing until we get to the office, snatching our clothes from the chair and carrying them downtown on our arm, there might even be half an hour more for a good, health-giving nap. Who knows? Perhaps those few minutes of extra sleep might make us just ten times as efficient during the day! That is what we must think of—efficiency. We must sacrifice our petty opinions on the matter and think of the rest of the day and our efficiency. There is no doubt that fifteen minutes' more sleep would do wonders for us, no matter how little we really want to take it.

By the time we have finished this line of argument we are out pretty fairly cold again, but not so cold that we are not conscious of anyone entering the room. We feel that they are going to say: "Come, come, don't go back to sleep again!" and we forestall this warn-

ing with a brisk "I know! I know! I'm just thinking!" This is said with one eye partially open and one tiny corner of the brain functioning. The rest of our powers add up to a total loss.

It is one of Nature's wonders how a man can carry on an argument with someone standing beside his bed and still be asleep to all intents and purposes. Not a very good argument, perhaps, and one in which many important words are missing or indistinct, but still an argument. It is an argument, however, which seldom wins, the state of justice in the world being what it is today.

Dozing before arising does not really come within the range of this treatise. What we are concerned with are those little lapses when we are fully dressed, when we fondly believe that no one notices. Riding on a train, for example.

There is the short-distance doze in a day coach, probably the most humiliating form of train sleeping. In this the elbow is rested on the window sill and the head placed in the

hand in an attitude of thought. The glass feels very cool on the forehead and we rest it there, more to cool off than anything else. The next thing we know the forehead (carrying the entire head with it) has slid down the length of the slippery pane and we have received a rather nasty bang against the woodwork. They shouldn't keep their glass so slippery. A person is likely to get badly hurt that way.

However, back again goes the forehead against the pane in its original position, with the hand serving more or less as a buffer, until another skid occurs, this time resulting in an angry determination to give the whole thing up entirely and sit up straight in the seat. Some dozers will take four or five slides without whimpering, going back each time for more with apparently undiminished confidence in their ability to see the thing through.

It is a game that you can't beat, however, and the sooner you sit up straight in your seat, the sooner you will stop banging your head.

Dozing in a Pullman chair is not so dangerous, as one does not have the risk of the sliding glass to cope with, but it is even less lovely in its appearance. Here the head is allowed to sink back against the antimacassar—just for a minute to see if the headrest is

really as comfortable as it seems. It is then but the work of a minute for the mouth to open slightly and the head to tip roguishly to the right, and there you are—as pretty a picture as one would care to see. You are very lucky if, when you come to and look about, you do not find your neighbors smiling in-

dulgently at some little vagaries of breathing or eccentricities of facial expression which you have been permitting yourself.

The game in all this public dozing is to act, on awakening, as if you had known all along what you were doing. If your neighbors are smiling, you should smile back, as if to say: "Fooled you that time! You thought I was asleep, didn't you?"

If they are not quite so rude as to smile, but look quickly back at their reading on seeing your eyes open, you should assume a brisk, businesslike expression indicating that you have been thinking out some weighty business problem with your eyes closed, and, now that you have at last come on its solution, that it is snap-snap! back to work for you! If, after a furtive look around, you discover that no one has caught you at it, then it will do no harm to give it another try, this time until your collar chokes you into awakening with a strangling gasp.

The collar, however, is not always an impediment to public dozing. In the theater,

for example, a good, stiff dress collar and shirt bosom have been known to hold the sleeper in an upright position when otherwise he might have plunged forward and banged his head on the back of the seat in front.

In my professional capacity as play reviewer I have had occasion to experiment in the various ways of sitting up straight and still snatching a few winks of health-giving sleep. I have found that by far the safest is to keep one's heavy overcoat on, especially if it is made of some good, substantial material which will hold a sagging torso erect within its folds. With a good overcoat, reënforced by a stiff dress shirt and a high collar, one may even go beyond the dozing stage and sink into a deep, refreshing slumber, and still not be made conspicuous by continual lurchings and plungings. Of course, if you are an uneasy sleeper and given to thrashing about, you will find that even a heavy overcoat will let you down once in a while. But for the average man, who holds approximately the same position after he has gone to sleep, I

don't think that this method can go wrong. Its only drawback is that you are likely to get a little warm along about the middle of the second act.

If you don't want to wear your overcoat in the theater, the next best method is to fold the arms across the chest and brace the chin against the dress collar, exerting a slight upward pressure with the arms against the shirt front. This, however, can be used only for the lightest of dozes, as, once unconsciousness has set in, the pressure relaxes and over you go.

Dozing at a play, however refreshing, makes it a bit difficult to follow the argument on the stage, as occasionally the nap drags itself out into a couple of minutes and you awake to find a wholly fresh set of characters on the scene, or even a wholly fresh scene. This is confusing. It is therefore wise to have someone along with you who will alternate watches with you, dozing when you are awake and keeping more or less alert while you are dozing. In this way you can keep abreast of what has been happening.

This, unfortunately, is impossible in personal conversations. If you slip off into a quick coma late some evening when your *vis-à-vis* is telling you about South America or a new solvent process, it is usually pretty difficult to pick up the thread where you dropped

it. You may remember that the last words he was saying were "—which is situated at the mouth of the Amazon," but that isn't going to help you much if you come to just as he is asking you: "What would *you* say are?" As in the personal-conversation doze the eyes very seldom completely close (it is more of a turning back of the eyeballs than a closing of

the lids) you may escape detection if you have a ready answer for the emergency. I find that "Well, I don't know," said very slowly and deliberately, will fit almost any question that has been asked you. "Yes" and "No" should never be offered, as they might make you sound even sillier than you look. If you say: "Well, I—don't—know," it will give you a chance to collect your wits (what few there are left) and may lead your questioner into answering the thing himself.

At any rate, it will serve as a stall. If there are other people present, some one of them is quite likely to come to your rescue and say something which will tip you off as to the general subject under discussion. From then on, you will have to fight your own battle. I can't help you.

The whole problem is one which calls for a great deal of thought. If we can develop some way in which a man can doze and still keep from making a monkey of himself, we have removed one of the big obstacles to human happiness in modern civilization. It goes

without saying that we don't get enough sleep while we are in bed; so we have got to get a little now and then while we are at work or at play. If we can find some way to keep the head up straight, the mouth closed, and just enough of the brain working to answer questions, we have got the thing solved right there.

I am working on it right now, as a matter of fact, but I find it a little difficult to keep awake.

THE MYSTERY OF BRIDGE BUILDING

I AM not much of a one to be writing on bridge building, having never really built a bridge myself, but if the reader (you) will overlook a little vagueness in some of the directions I myself will overlook the fact that the reader has no right to criticize, unless, of course, he happens to be a professional bridge builder himself.

It has always seemed to me that the most difficult part of building a bridge would be the start. What does a man do first when he sets out to build a bridge? Granted he has his plans all drawn up and enough food and drink to last him a month. He is standing on one bank of a river and wants to build a bridge across to the other bank. What is the first thing that he does? (I seem to be asking all the questions.)

I suppose that he takes a shovel and digs a

little hole, and has his picture taken doing it. Maybe somebody waves a flag. I have seen photographs of such a ceremony, but they never show what happens next. Frankly, I would be up against it if any one were to put me on one bank of a river and say: "Build a bridge across to the other bank." I might be able to finish it if some one would start it for me, but as for making the first move I would be left blushing furiously.

I once heard of a man who was confronted by just this emergency. It had got around somehow that he was an authority on bridge-work (as a matter of fact, he was a dentist), and when the people in a neighboring town wanted a bridge built they sent for him. He was an easy going sort of chap, and after they had given him a big dinner and a good cigar he didn't have the heart to tell them that he really knew nothing about the sort of bridge building that they wanted. He kept meaning to tell them, but they were so nice and evidently had so much confidence in him that he hated to spoil their good time, especially after

he had eaten their dinner. So he just sat tight and let things take their course.

Pretty soon he found himself on the left bank of the river, with a brass band huddled around him and a lot of people in frock coats, and after some one had read Lincoln's Gettysburg address he was given a gold shovel and told to go ahead. Fortunately the people didn't stick around and watch him, as they figured out that he might be embarrassed by so many spectators, so he stuck the shovel in the ground and waved good-by to every one, and then bent over as if he were going to work. As a matter of fact, he was in a terrible state of mind.

He looked across at the other bank and tried to figure out how far it was. Then he looked behind him and tried to figure out how far that was. He thought that maybe the thing to do was to go and get the bridge made somewhere else, bring it to this spot, and stick one end of it in the hole he had dug and then swing it around until the other end was over the other bank, but that didn't seem practical.

So he sat down and began writing some letters he had been meaning to write for months. Then he started throwing shovels full of dirt into the river, hoping against hope that he might get enough of it piled up on the river bottom to make a kind of bridge in itself, but he couldn't even make it show above the surface in one spot.

Just then a man with a rod and a fish basket happened to stroll by and asked him what he was doing.

"You will just laugh when I tell you," said the bridge builder.

"No, I won't, honestly," said the fisherman.

"Then you don't laugh easily," said the bridge builder. "I'm building a bridge."

"And a very smart thing to be doing, too," replied the fisherman. "One never can have too many bridges." Then he added, "You see, I didn't laugh."

This so endeared him to the bridge builder that he offered the stranger a drink, and one thing led to another until they both were

sitting on the river bank talking about old songs they used to sing when they were boys.

"Do you remember one that used to go, 'Hello ma baby, hello ma lady, hello ma ragtime gal'?" asked one.

" 'Send me a kiss by wire, honey, ma heart's on fire'?" added the other. "Is that the one you mean?"

"It sure is," said the other. "And then it went, 'If you refuse me, honey, you lose me, then I'll be left alone.' "

" 'So, baby, telephone and tell me I'se your own,' " they both sang in unison.

Well, this sort of thing went on for months and months, until they had exhausted all the old songs they used to know and got to making up new ones. The bridge expert forgot entirely what he was there for and the fisherman had never really known, so he had nothing to forget. People used to come over from the town to see how the bridge was coming on and then would tiptoe away again when they saw the two having such a good time. Finally they got some one else to build the

bridge, starting from the other side of the river, and what was the surprise of the original bridge expert one day to look up from his game of cribbage with the fisherman and find that they were directly in the way of the vehicular traffic from a brand new bridge. You may be sure that he joined in the laughter, even though the joke was in a way on him. But he saw the fun of the thing, and that is better than any bridge building. What we need in this world is fewer bridges and more fun.

However, the problem of the bridge expert which has just been cited doesn't do much to help those of us who don't understand how a bridge is built. What we want to know is how the second man that the town got went about the job. He evidently knew something about it, for he got the thing done.

I think that it is all that stuff in the air over the river that puzzles me. I can understand the things they build on the banks all right. You go about building those just as you would go about building a house, except, of

course, for the windows and front porch. But all those wires and hangings which are suspended from apparently nowhere and yet are strong enough to hold up any number of automobiles and trolley cars that take it into their heads to cross the river. There is something very fishy about those. Who supports them? I don't like the looks of it, frankly.

Of course, I suppose that if I had gone a little further in mathematics in school I would be a little easier in my mind about bridges. There is evidently something beyond plane geometry which I don't know about and which may hold the key to this mystery. Maybe it's in plane geometry. I missed a couple of days when I had a sore throat, and perhaps those are the days when the geometry class took up bridge building. Or it is quite possible that I actually studied it and didn't absorb it. I would say that my absorption point in mathematics was about .007, and I would not be surprised to find out that I had missed the whole point entirely.

However, even though your engineer has

it all worked out mathematically on paper, with figures and digits all over the place, I still don't see how they get those wires up there in the air or how the wires are induced to hold things up. I studied physics and I'm no fool. You can't tell me that all that weight isn't pulling down, and my question is, "Down from what?"

I don't mean to be nasty about this thing, or narrow minded. Neither do I incline to the theory of witchcraft—much. There is a man in India, so they tell me, who throws a rope up in the air and then climbs up it, which is evidently the principle of bridge building. But that man in India is supposed to be a fakir, and, according to some theories, the spectators are hypnotized into thinking they see him climb the rope, whereas he is actually not doing it at all. This would be a good explanation of bridges if it were not for the fact that you can't hypnotize a truck into thinking it is crossing a river.

Of course, the old fashioned covered bridge is easy enough to understand. People

could wade right out into those rivers and stick the posts in by hand, or at any rate could get planks long enough to reach across. All that was necessary was to get good planks that would rumble. And, by the way, what has become of the old fashioned rumbling plank? You never hear planks rumbling today as they used to on those old covered bridges. I once spent the night in a farmhouse which I later found out was near a covered bridge. In the middle of the night I heard what I thought was thunder; so I got up and shut the window. The room got very hot in about half an hour, so, hearing no more thunder, I thought that the storm had passed us by, and got up and opened the window again. In about ten minutes there was another rumble; this time very loud. With a bound I was out of bed and had the window down in a jiffy. Then came half an hour of stifling again, with a pronounced odor of burning hay from the mattress. I got up and looked out the window. The stars were shining. So up she came again and I went back to bed

after stepping on both my shoes, which were lying upside down by the bed. This went on at intervals of half an hour all night, until I finally overcame my fear of thunderstorms and decided to let the lightning come right in and get into bed with me if it wanted to, rather than shut the window again. I have already given away the point of this story, so I need hardly say that I found out in the morning that it actually had been thunder that I had heard and that the town on the other side of the mountain had had a bad storm all night. The covered bridge, however, could have been responsible for the rumbling if it had wanted to.

This little anecdote, exciting and amusing as it has been for all of us, I am sure, has drawn us quite a long way from the theme of this treatise, which, you will remember, was, "What Sort of Trickery Goes Into the Building of Bridges?" I don't happen to know many bridge engineers, so I am unable to say whether they are tricksters as a class. In fact, the only one that I know built a privately

owned toll bridge across a river once, and then found that the township ran a free bridge about half a mile down the river around a bend which he hadn't seen before. So he hung his bridge with Japanese lanterns and limited it to rickshaws and spent his vacations fishing from it.

But, aside from possibly taking on a job for building a pontoon bridge, which I could do if I had enough boats, I am distinctly not in the market for a bridge contract until some one explains the principle of the thing more clearly to me.

I once read of a man who was caught in a hotel fire and broke open one of those glass cases containing what is known as a "fire ax." Then, as he stood there, ax in hand, watching little curls of smoke coming up through the floor, he tried to figure out what to do with the ax. He could chop a hole in the floor and let more fire up, or he could chop a hole in the wall and make a nice draft. Aside from those two courses of action he seemed to be saddled with an ax and that was all. After

waving it weakly around his head once or twice, thinking maybe to frighten the fire away, he just stood there, making imaginary chopping motions, until the firemen came and carried him out still asking, "What do I do with this?"

Such will be my dilemma when some one puts a shovel in my hand and says: "How about building a bridge?"

THE BATHROOM REVOLUTION

A FIRM of what purport to be plumbers (but whom I suspect of being royalist propagandists trying to get the Bourbon kings back into power again) has just issued a catalogue showing how to make your bathroom look like the Great Hall at Versailles—or I guess the best way to go about it would be to make the Great Hall at Versailles look like a bathroom. No one would have a room that size in his house to start with. And, as an old bathroom lover, I resent the tone of this pamphlet.

According to these so-called "plumbers" (or French royalists, more likely, and where is our state department to allow such open agitation against a friendly government?), they will come trooping into your new house —it would have to be a new house, for you never could get it into your old one—and

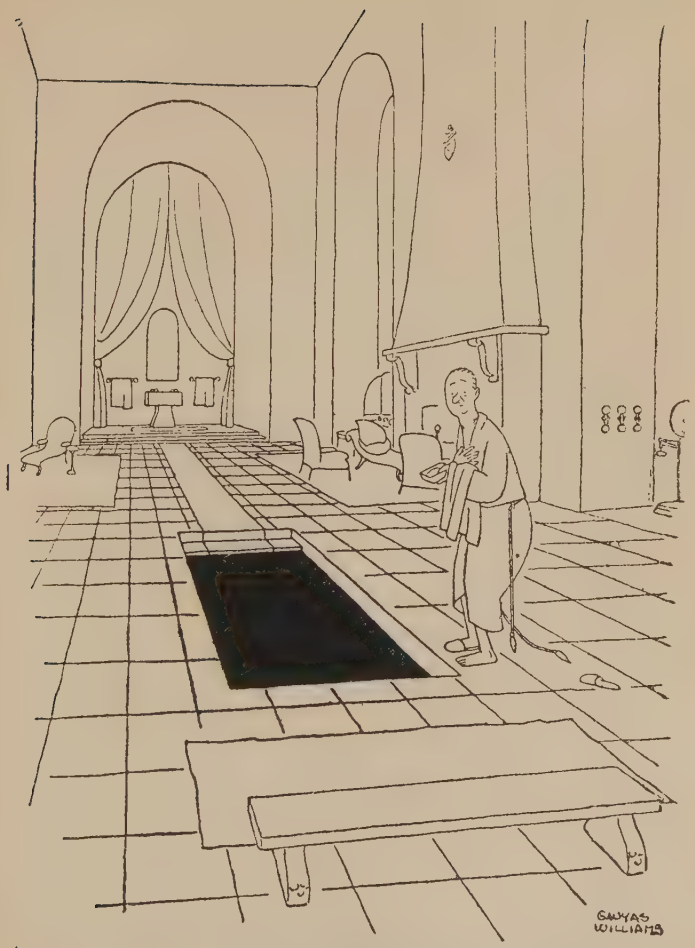
will install there a "Diocletian bath" (page 4 of the catalogue) which, judging from the colored illustration, is a room about the size of the tapestry room in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It has a sunken bathtub, and great mirrors stretch from floor to ceiling, while over a Roman bench is draped a blue robe suitable for wrapping up an emperor in.

Or, for milady, there is the "Trianon bath" (page 5) which resembles one of those French interiors we used to see in the old Biograph pictures when the movies were young. The bathtub in the "Trianon" arrangement is so cleverly concealed that a person might go pattering about with his towel for days among the silk hangings and rococo furniture without ever finding it at all.

On page 7 we have the "Récamier bath," which is evidently intended for formal minuet parties and possibly a royal levee during the season, but which bears no resemblance to what used to be known as "the bathroom" in old-fashioned houses of the 1920-'29 period.

The "Petti Palace bath" and the "Flamingo bath," on pages 8 and 9, I will not attempt to describe, as you would not believe me. Suffice it to say that the "Petti Palace" bathtub could be used either for bathing in large groups or for a small naval engagement between ships of the third class.

Now this elaboration of the bathroom is all very well in its way, provided it does not make us effete as a nation and does not get us into other old Roman customs of lolling about on couches at our meals and holding bunches of grapes up over our heads, but, since a revolution in bathrooms is evidently well on its way, let us hope that too much will not be sacrificed to magnificence and that taking a bath will be made such a formal ritual that it can be indulged in only by those who can trace their ancestry back to the Merovingan kings and have inherited robes of silk and gold to dress the part in. I know very well that my old blue towelling bathrobe would never fit in with any room shown in this catalogue. Rather than enter one of



MY OLD BLUE TOWELLING BATHROBE WOULD NEVER FIT IN WITH ANY ROOM SHOWN IN THIS CATALOGUE.

them in my straw slippers and flannel pajamas I would just take a quick sponge bath in my own room and let it go at that.

In the first place, it is going to be hard to heat one of these great halls, and a bathroom which is not piping hot had better be used to store trunks in. The only way that I can see to get the "Diocletian bath" fit for human occupancy on a cold winter's morning would be to have an army of serfs dragging in monster logs and piling them in a blazing heap in a fireplace right beside the tub. And who wants an army of serfs popping in and out of the bathroom when he is bathing? It is difficult enough as it is now to make people keep the bathroom door shut on a cold morning, without bringing in a lot of strangers.

And, even with a huge fire blazing, the only part of you to be kept warm would be the side toward the fireplace, and what good will it do you to have 10-foot mirrors lining the walls of your bathroom, if, when you get out of your bath, you are going to have to look at yourself turning blue under your very

eyes? I am not crazy about the mirror idea, anyway, even in summer. I would prefer to forget, if possible.

The only advantage that I can see to the ballroom-size bathroom on a cold morning (provided some way can be found to heat it) would be that one would have more space in which to dress. In the old-fashioned 10-by-12 bathroom there is always a little difficulty in finding a place to put one's clothes after the mad dash from the cold bedroom with an armful of the day's garments.

Of course, some of the smarter ones undress in the bathroom the night before and have time to leave their clothing in neat piles where it can be easily reached the next morning, but even this foresight does not cover the getting of clean shirts out of the bureau (a process at which several people already have frozen to death this winter) or the problem of keeping the trousers in press overnight. You can't expect trousers to look like much after they have been draped over a

bathtub or left hanging from the medicine closet door all night.

In the "Petti Palace bath," I must admit, there is room for a complete wardrobe in which a dozen suits may be hung and a row of bureaus containing enough clean shirts and under-garments to last the winter. In fact, if you had the "Petti Palace bath" in your house you could rent the rest of the rooms out to lodgers and just live in there (and the adjoining bedroom) until spring came.

One big item which is likely to be overlooked in these monster bathrooms, however, is the upkeep. The week they are installed they may be impressive, but it would take a corps of interior decorators to keep them so, especially if there are children in the family. In a house where there are small children the bathroom soon takes on the appearance of the Old Curiosity Shop. In even one small bathroom, when there are children in the house, one finds rocking horses, milk heaters, tin soldiers, enormous rubber ducks, odd books, overshoes, and skates, and, once in a while,

reefers and stocking caps belonging to neighbors' children. Sometimes even the neighbors' children themselves.

Can you imagine what would happen in the "Flamingo bath" with its great stretches of red lacquer tiling if a family of children were given the run of it? A man with some idea of taking a bath would have to climb over miles of electric train tracks and under railroad switches. He most likely would have to cope with submarines and rubber whales in the tank-like tub and would be lucky if he got out without a nasty fall on a slippery floor which had been prepared, and used, as a skating rink. Instead of a stray tin soldier now and then, he would probably step on a complete brigade of bayonets, the bath mat being temporarily used as a tent with an American flag flying from it.

Of course, it may be argued, a house with room enough in it for a "Flamingo bath" would also be likely to contain a nursery, but, unless children have changed a lot in the last two or three days, they prefer the bathroom

to the nursery any day as a scene for their activities. And, unless parents have changed a lot in the same space of time, what the children want, they get.

The grownups, too, would contribute to the chaos of the decor. How long would the "Récamier bath" look like Mme. Récamier after daddy had changed his razor blades six or seven times and had used up all but a third each of five tubes of tooth paste? There seems to be a common strain of miserliness in the American people when it comes to throwing away tooth paste tubes which have a little left in the bottom. I have seen bathroom shelves piled high with two-thirds used tubes (all without caps), and a bottle of mouth wash, with maybe an eighth of an inch of liquid showing, has been known to keep its place beside a fresh bottle until the fresh bottle is down to an eighth of an inch and, in turn, takes its place beside a new one. It is only when the door of the medicine closet refuses to shut, or the whole shelfful of old aluminum topples over into the wash basin

that a general cleaning out is instigated. (I am not speaking of my own bathroom shelf. That is kept very neat. I refer to the bathroom shelves in other houses.)

Just as a detail, but one which is quite important to a successful bathroom regime, I should like to know what provision is made in these luxurious and sensual bath palaces for such minor items as the recovery of lost tooth paste tube caps. If they have solved this problem, they may justify themselves. The fact that so many capless tubes are seen lying about in people's bathrooms is due to the fact that the caps are, at that moment, lodged in the spout of the wash basin. I don't know what the capacity of the average spout for tube caps is, but I know, by actual count, that there are nine in mine right now. I used to claw them up after they had slipped out of my hand and gone down the vent. I could see them peeking up at me, just about a quarter of an inch below the rim, and have sometimes spent 15 or 20 minutes trying to hook

them out with a tooth brush or razor blade (razor blades are not to be recommended as tube cap hooks, however, owing to the danger of leaving a piece of finger in the spout with the cap).

But I am older now, and more cynical, and, after the first frantic manoeuvres to catch the cap before it rolls out of sight, I give the whole thing up and go on calmly brushing my teeth. I have other things to do. But it does seem as if these royalist plumbers who

have gone to such lengths to make the bathroom a menace to our homespun civilization at least might have worked out some way of avoiding this common catastrophe.

Just one more word about the menace of these patrician pools. What will be their logical effect on guest towels? If, in our modest little white tile bathrooms, it has been necessary to make the guest towel a semi-rigid, highly glazed bit of vivid tapestry in order to impress the guests, what will have to be done to make it show up in a room which is already a treasure chamber of bijouterie and a royal riot of color? The ordinary towels for family use will have to be at least as elaborate and showy as guest towels are today. What is there left in magnificence for guest toweling? Nothing, that I can see, but spun gold with ermine fringes, or perhaps small sheets of strung jewels glittering in the light of a concealed and highly colored bulb. Well, no one will ever use them anyway, any more than they do today.

If I ever do succumb to the Louis XIV in-

stinct in me (and make enough money) and do have one of the "Diocletian baths" installed in that great big new house I shall build, there will be a secret door, hidden behind a rare tapestry, to which I alone will have the key. Behind it I will have built a nice, small, warm, white tiled bathroom, with good brown coarse towels and a sponge, and a tub into which I can get and read with comfort. Any kings or princes or motion picture actors that I have out for the week-end may use the other.

"THEY'RE OFF!"

THERE are several spectacular ways in which I could dissipate a fortune, if I were to have one left to me, but one of them is not horse-racing.

Some day you may read of my daredevil escapades with a team of arch-duchesses on the Riviera in which "Mad Bob" (that will be I) rides up and down the Promenade des Anglais on a high-powered running-board throwing out burning mille-franc notes at the people (all of whom love me for my wild, likeable eccentricities). You may read of someone who has discovered me, a grey-

haired, distinguished-looking old derelict, pacing the water-front of Port Said, living on the pittance furnished me by friends whom I had wined and dined in the old days

when I was known as "The Playboy of Two Continents," before a group of international bankers conspired against me to wipe out my entire fortune at one *coup.* (I hate those bankers already, just thinking about it.) But you will never hear about my taking my life

at a racecourse—unless it is from sheer confusion. That is one thing you don't have to worry about, in case you worry about me at all.

Fond as I am of horses when meeting them personally (and give me a handful of sugar and I will make friends with any horse—or lose my hand up to the wrist in the attempt) I am strangely unmoved when I see them racing each other up and down a track. A great calm descends on me at the cry "They're Off!" and, as the race proceeds, this calm increases in intensity until it is practically a coma, from which I have to be aroused by friends telling me which horse won.

Much of this coolness towards horse-racing is due to the fact that I almost never have any money up. I have no scruples in the matter (except that old New England scruple against losing money), but I never seem to be able to get the hang of just how the betting is done. By the time I have decided what horse I would like to bet on, everybody seems to have disappeared, either through indiffer-

ence to my betting plans or because the race is on. I hear other people betting, but I never can quite see whom they are betting with. The whole thing is more or less chaotic to me.

In the second place, I never can *see* a horse-race. Of course, when you go to a race in England, like the Grand National, you don't expect to see. All you do is listen very carefully and peer into the mist and, when you hear the crowd murmur "They're Off!" go around back to a refreshment tent and munch on a cold meat-pie until you think it is time for the race to be finished. Then go to the door of the tent and someone (who didn't see the finish either) will tell you who won. That is the Sport of Kings as England knows it.

In this country, you usually can see the course, but I personally have a great deal of trouble in finding out where the horses are. Part of this is due to my inability to manipulate long-range glasses. I can swing them jauntily by my side before the race starts, and

I can hold them up to my eyes (until my arms get tired—then to hell with them) but I can't seem to see anything except an indistinct blur of grass and an object which later turns out to be the back of the head of one of the officials. Even if I find the horses when they are grouped at the barrier, I lose them the minute they start out and spend my time sweeping the horizon for them while my friends are muttering "Look at that! Look at him come up! There goes Captain's Garter! Here comes Onion Soup!" The last time I used field glasses at a horse race I thought I saw a rowboat in the distance manned by a suspiciously large number of oarsmen; so I haven't felt like using the glasses since then. With my naked eye I can at least see the surrounding country, and without the complication of strange rowboats.

I have therefore given up the use of glasses entirely and carry them just for looks. (I am even thinking of giving that up, too, as I have been told that they don't *look* right on me.) With the naked eye at least I can see the

grass clearly and, at Belmont Park, there are some very pretty fountains to watch in case the race itself has eluded you. Even with my eyes free to roam as they will, I lose the horses before they have gone a hundred yards. Everyone else seems to know where they are, even people with much worse eyesight than mine (and I may say that my eyesight is very good as a general thing), but the whole affair becomes a mystery to me until suddenly I find that they are at the last turn and into the homestretch. Then comes the problem of finding out which horse is which.

It is, I will admit, a very pretty sight to see a lot of horses coming in at the finish, but it would be much more exciting for me if I could distinguish the various colors. Insofar as I have any favorites at all, they are always the horses who carry a bright red, because that is the only color that means anything to me at the finish. These yellow and pink mixtures get all confused with the baby-blues and blood-oranges when they get bunched together, and I am constantly upset by the spec-

tacle of what seems to me to be two jockeys on one horse. I don't like to admit after the finish that I haven't been able to detect the winner, and so a great many times I am completely in the dark unless I overhear a chance remark or see an early edition of the papers. This makes going to the races something of a mockery.

Then, too, there is another source of confusion for me in the varying lengths of the races they see fit to run. I think that I am correct in saying that one has a right to expect that any race shall finish down in front of the grand stands. I don't mean to be arbitrary about this, but that is the way it seems to me. All right, then. The last race I saw at Belmont Park (New York) began where they all begin—that is, just beyond my range of vision, over at the right. The horses, as near as I could tell, ran straight away along the other side of the course, meaning nothing as far as I was concerned. Then, just as they reached the far turn, they seemed to give the whole thing up as a bad job and began run-

ning in different directions. I thought that maybe it was a game like hare-and-hounds, that one bunch of horses went North and another went South and still others East and West, with the ones who got back on to the course first, winning. But no. It seems that the race was over, 'way out there, and they were simply dispersing for the afternoon. In other words, nobody in the stands (unless they happened to know black art and were able to work long-range glasses) had any idea as to which horse won. I was particularly fortunate in not caring.

But, aside from the strain of trying to keep the horses within your range of vision and telling which is which, there is another feature of horse-racing which seems to me a little irksome. That is the intervals between races. If left to myself I would be inclined to read a good book between times, or even during the races themselves. But this, evidently, is not allowed. You must get up as soon as a race is over and go out behind the stands and walk around in the paddock. Just

what good this is supposed to do I never could figure out. You look at the horses and you look at the jockeys and you say "How are you?" to a lot of people who are walking around looking at the horses and the jockeys. But as for changing anything at that late hour, even your mind on a bet, the whole thing seems a little futile. Most of the people who walk around in the paddock just before a race don't know whether a horse looks good or not. They just look. They make marks with a pencil and try to appear "in the know" (*slang phrase*), but even *I* know that they aren't getting anywhere by doing it. Unless a horse in the paddock is obviously walking on three legs, or a jockey is obviously cockeyed, this walking around is just walking around and I can just walk around at home or in Times Square. I don't have to go out to a race-course to do it.

Personally, I always get lost when I walk around in the paddock. I start out with, let us say, three friends, whose company is sufficiently pleasing to me to make me leave my

comfortable subway or corner drug-store and go out to the track in the first place. We amble around under the trees for a few minutes, look at a couple of horses who would much rather not be looked at, and then, all of a sudden, I am alone. My friends have dis-

appeared into comparatively thin air. I turn to the right and run into a horse. I turn to the left and run into several people who might as well be horses as far as anything in common we have together. Then I get a little panicky. I begin rushing. I try to find the clubhouse. It, too, has disappeared. There

are a lot of people about, but I don't seem to know any of them. Once in a while I recognize a man I know who works in the box office of a theatre, but he always looks so worried that I dare not speak to him. I feel that maybe I am out of place. Later I find that I am. The hot sun beats down on me and I get to crying. The whole thing takes on the aspect of a bad dream. Even if I do get back to the stands, I merely am getting back to further confusion. There really is nothing left for me to do but go home. And I don't know how to get home. (*I am writing this out by the paddock at the last race-course I went to. Will someone who reads this, and who lives near Saratoga, come and get me out?*)

"WHAT SHALL WE SAY?"

I DON'T want to be an alarmist—oh, what do I care? Sure, I'll *be* an alarmist, and will point out that the more literate sections of our country are today on the verge of an epidemic of brain-fag which threatens to plunge us into a national mental collapse.

"What!" you will say. "An epidemic of brain-fag which threatens to plunge us into a national mental collapse? Man, you are mad!" I will show you how mad I am.

Go into any telegraph office in any one of our larger cities and, at three out of the six desks reserved for customers (two of which are equipped with chained pencils, one of which has a point), you will see people sitting with their heads in their hands obviously going through a critical period of mental *accouchement*. They write out messages, tear them up, gnaw at their knuckles, write out

more messages and tear them up. Perhaps there will be two or three grouped about one desk, each one making occasional feverish suggestions which seem to die on their lips with the uttering. The atmosphere is one of complete human frustration and the very air vibrates with mental waves beating themselves out against the walls.

These people are trying to compose original and funny telegrams to their friends. They are breathlessly trying to keep up with a movement which has gained such force in the past few years as to oppress even the casual sender of wires and to sweep the pioneer wags who started it over the hill to the madhouse. About the only citizens who can go right into a telegraph office, write out their messages, and turn them in without losing great handfuls of hair in their composition are those who are sending messages of condolence, and it won't be long before some comic starts the fashion of making even these facetious, probably with one to the bereaved

reading: "What are you doing day after tomorrow?"

A little group of merrymakers get together for dinner and, along about the potato-chip course, someone suggests: "We ought to send a wire to Eddie!" This seems a bully idea at the time. Eddie would so love to be there, and will get such a good laugh out of a kidding telegram from his old pals. They laugh just to think of how Eddie will laugh. So a telegraph pad is sent for, and someone who has a pencil starts out by writing Eddie's name and address in very large, plain letters at the top.

"What shall we say?"

At this point, the dinner is abandoned, all digestive processes are halted in mid-air, and the gay little group settles down to the serious business of thinking up a funny telegram for Eddie.

No one wants to start suggesting, for fear that his suggestions won't be funny enough. The man with the pencil writes out something tentatively, but decides before submit-

ting it that it won't do. So he tears up that blank and writes Eddie's name and address again.

"How about saying: 'Have just found a piece of food in the dinner. What shall we do?'?" someone suggests faintly.

Several of the more polite ones laugh without feeling, but no move is made to write it down. Its sponsor blushes and retires.

"How about this?" (a fatal prelude to any suggestion): " 'Cross marks our room. Wish you were here.' "

Not even the polite ones laugh at this. It is withdrawn hastily. There is a long silence. The man with the pencil has been making another stab at it by himself, and proceeds to read off what he has written:

" 'Don't let any ——' No, I guess that isn't very funny." And he tears up the blank in embarrassment.

Deep depression settles over the group and the clock ticks gloomily. Everyone is trying to think of something comical and everyone is rapidly losing caste with himself and with

the rest of the party. What once was a bright little extemporaneous dinner has solidified into a Regents' examination period. The whole thing finally breaks up by sending a wire to Eddie reading: "HOW ARE YOU

KID?," with nobody satisfied, including Eddie, who doesn't know whom it is from.

This dispiriting procedure is repeated, either in groups or singly, every time anyone sails for Europe, takes a train to California (catching the traveller at Albany, Rochester,

Chicago, and Albuquerque with telegrams of progressive hilarity is an art so fine as to be practically extinct), or, for those whose acquaintance includes mimes and mountebanks, every time a new play opens.

Telegrams to opening nights are in a class by themselves. They must be good, because they are likely to be displayed on the dressing-room mirror of the recipient during the run of the play. They must be different, because these people check up. And they must be frequent, as the average life of a play today is four hours. The whole thing has become a nightmare.

Thus we find that not only is the national brain-fibre rapidly wearing itself out, but most of the fun of dining, travelling, and opening is being dimmed by the constant obligation of being funny about it in ten words. My suggestion would be that the Western Union add to its collection of readymade greetings for Christmas, Easter, Yom Kippur, and Childbirth a printed form including twenty excruciating telegrams to be sent "just

for the fun of it," and twenty even more excruciating ones to be sent in reply.

Either this, or begin all over again and go back to the old way of just saying: "Bon Voyage," "Good Luck," or, better yet, sending no telegram at all.

BRINGING BACK THE MORRIS DANCE

I DON'T know why I never thought to speak of it before, but we don't do nearly enough Morris-dancing in this country. These fine early summer days (or early winter days, or whenever you read this) it seems a shame to be devoting ourselves to golf and tennis and drinking when we might be out of doors prancing around a pole and falling down every few feet.

In Merrie Englandie they used to have quite a good time doing this, and there is no reason why we shouldn't today, except that

good poles are hard to get. Poles with ribands on them are practically unknown. The thing to do is get a pole and put the ribands on yourself, and then you are sure that they are fresh.

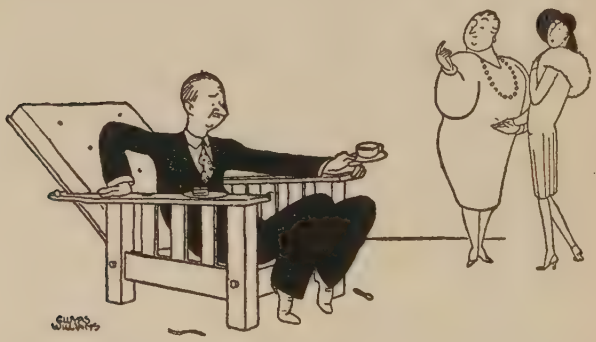
Of course, it is not necessary to have a pole for your Morris dance, but it is better because then you have something to lean against when you get tired. (I am tired before I start, just thinking about it.) The chief thing for Morris-dancing is a smock and lots of ribands. I am sorry to keep harping on this riband business, but you are just nobody in Morris-dancing circles unless you have a lot of ribands hanging off you. These serve to float in the wind and to trip you up. I am going right ahead in this thesis on the assumption that "ribands" are the same as our "ribbons," although I haven't looked it up. If they are something entirely different, then I am getting myself into a terrible mix-up and might better stop right here.

Bells are also worn strapped to the dancers' legs to give warning to the other dancers and

show where each individual is at any given time. These dances used to run on 'way into the night sometimes, and without the bells there would be nasty collisions and perhaps serious injury. It is essential that the bells be strapped tightly to the legs, otherwise the dancer will have to keep stooping and hitching them up every few steps, thereby spoiling the symmetry of the dance figure. If the bells *are* loose and there is no way of tightening them, the next best thing is to have a very small child run along beside the dancer and hold them up. It would have to be a *very* small child, though, so small as to be almost repulsive.

I had always thought (when I thought of it at all) that the name "Morris dance" came from William Morris who designed the old Morris chairs. By the way, did you ever see a Morris chair that *wasn't* old? They must have been new *some*time, when they were bought, but by the time anyone ever got to looking at them the seats were all sunken in and the arms covered with cigarette burns.

Perhaps that was the way William Morris designed them. I frankly don't know. As I look back on them now, it also seems that they were always awfully low, so low as to be almost a part of the floor. It was always very difficult to get up out of one, once you got in,



and I wouldn't be surprised if a great many people are still sitting in them, which would account for a great many people that have been missing for a long time. Expeditions might be started to go and get missing people out of Morris chairs—or maybe you don't care.

Well, anyway, it *wasn't* that William

Morris who worked up the Morris dance, because he came a great deal later and was too busy with chairs, anyway. I understand that the Moors in Spain did the first Morris dances, and called it the "Morisco," probably a trade name like "Nabisco" and "Delco." It is barely possible that one of the Marx Brothers' ancestors, named Mawruss, invented it and began that pleasing trick of nomenclature which has resulted in "Groucho," "Harpo," "Chico," and "Zeppo" among his descendants. At any rate, the dance that the Moors used to do was the "Morisco" and "Morris" was as near as the English could get the name. You would think that a great big nation like England could get the little name "Morisco" right. But no.

We are told that, in Merrie Englandie, one of the dancers was always decked out as Robin Hood "with a magpye's plume to his capp and a russat bearde," which is as lousy spelling as you will see grouped together in any one sentence anywhere. At first, the only music was that of the bells, but that got pretty

tiresome after a while and they brought out a flute, or "tabor," which probably added nothing. I can, offhand, think of nothing more dismal.

Of course, I hope that you don't think that I am under the impression that the Morris dance was the *first* outdoor dancing done by people. I am not quite *that* much of a ninny. The first records that we have of such things are those of the Egyptians about 5000 B. C. (And what a long time ago *that* was!) Nobody knows what they had to dance about in 5000 B. C., but they were hard at it, for we find pictures of them dancing on their sarcophagi. That is, they didn't dance on their sarcophagi, but they drew pictures on their sarcophagi of dancing, which must have been almost as painful. In this dance, eight maidens from the local maidenry danced around and around with no particular idea in mind, finally falling down when they got tired, which was in anywhere from ten to fifteen minutes. This left them with the rest of the afternoon free, but they probably weren't good for much.

Most of all folk dancing that followed this has been based on the same idea—round, and round, and round, and then stop. In the Chinese dances they did a great deal of banging as they danced, striking swords on shields and scowling, but there is no record of anyone ever getting hurt. They got awfully tired, though. That seems to be the story of all group dancing through the ages, people getting awfully tired. It is a wonder that no one ever thought of just not dancing at all.

Sometimes, of course, the dances did mean something, usually an appeal to the Rain God to do something about the crops. The Egyptians had a dance like this, but one year they did it *too* well and got nothing *but* rain; so they had to work in a figure which was an appeal to the Sun God to come and drive away the Rain God. This resulted in a lot of hard feeling between the Sun God and the Rain God and the entire dance had to be discontinued, with the result that, for about fifty years, no crops came up at all.

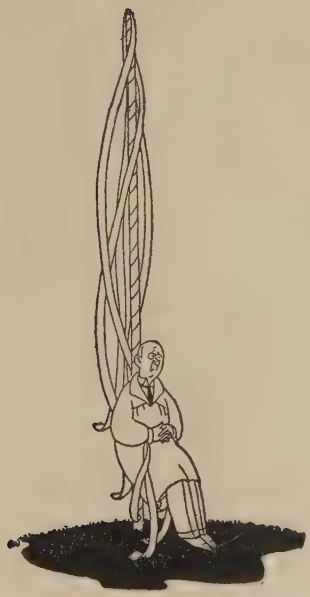
But we are getting away from our Morris

dance, which is perhaps just as well. By the sixteenth century you would have thought that people would be working up something new in the line of dancing, but the only difference between the Morris dance and that one of the Egyptians was the bells on the legs. The Egyptians also danced sideways a lot, which made it difficult for them to get anywhere much. The English rustics did know enough to dance forward and back, but that isn't much of a development for over six thousand years, is it?

A lot of people try to read a sex meaning into dancing, but that seems to me to be pretty far-fetched. By the time you have been panting and blowing around in a circle for five or ten minutes, keeping your mind steadily on maintaining your balance and not tripping, sex is about the *last* thing that would enter your head. Havelock Ellis even goes so far as to say that all life is essentially a dance, that we live in a rhythm which is nothing but a more cosmic form of dancing. This may be true of some people, but there are others,

among whom I am proud to count myself, to whom life is static, even lethargic, and who are disciples of the Morris who designed the Morris chair rather than the Morris of the dance.

Havelock Ellis can dance through life if he wants to, but I think I'll sit this one out, if you don't mind.



ONE SET OF FRENCH DISHES

LAST summer when I was in France, doing my bit with the other American visitors to create ill-will among the natives and hasten the outbreak of the Big Franco-American War, I bought a set of dishes. They were just simple earthenware dishes, such as used to have "For a Good Dog" lettered on them, but as they were made in a little town up back in the mountains near the Mediterranean, they seemed to be rather smart. They cost something like three cents apiece and were a bright blue. I now think that we made a mistake in buying them.

As there were perhaps forty pieces in all, including a large bowl which the old man said was for soup, it seemed impractical to try to jam them all in a trunk with the rest of the knickknacks and even less practical to carry them in our hands with our umbrellas

and everything. So we asked the old man if he would think up some way of putting them in a barrel and sending them to America by freight. He said *"Oui, oui!"* which we figured out to mean that he would. And he evidently did.

That was three months ago. Today I got a notice from the Custom House saying that there was a bbl. on the good ship "Hannoy" for me. The only bbl. that I can think of which would take a ship like the "Hannoy" is a bbl. of dishes. I don't suppose that anyone would be sending me a bbl. of beer, because it is pretty well known around France that I don't drink. Certainly not French beer. The notice said for me to put my things right on and come down to the dock and claim my goods, otherwise they couldn't answer for what would happen to the bbl. But somehow I don't think that I will.

For in the same mail came a big, official-looking sheet, colored orange, with lots of stamps on it and about six hundred and fifty thousand French words closely printed. It

says at the top "*Compagnie Francaise de Navigation à Vapeur*" and that means, according to a very hasty translation which I have thrown together "French Company of Navigation to Steam." These French are very quick at picking up new inventions and here is Robert Fulton scarcely cold in his grave before we find them navigating to steam. The rest of the document is not so clear.

The only typewritten words on the sheet are "Hannoy" and "*1 caisse poterie rustique.*" This evidently means my dishes. But the rest of the reading-matter is rather cryptic. There is so much of it, in the first place, and, at the bottom, it says that "*le chargeur*" (which must be I, unless it is the old man in Biotte) declares to have taken cognizance of the clauses printed above and accepts them. (All this is in French, mind you, but I get that part all right.) I am not so sure, however, that I want to accept the clauses printed above.

In the first place, as I read it over, the whole thing seems to be a threat. I have evi-

dently placed myself under suspicion by shipping a bbl. of "*poterie rustique*" to America. Spelling out the words in my rough, untutored way, I seem to detect a great many penalties. I don't know whether the French penalize you merely for shipping goods to another country, but I wouldn't put it past them. Mind you, I think that the Germans treated the French very badly in 1914 and I never had any use for the Kaiser, but I would not put it past the French to slip in a dirty penalty now and then if they got a chance. And on this orange bill-of-lading of mine, I seem to detect a slight plot to have my head cut off in the Place de la Concorde.

Under a paragraph marked "*Clause penale*" I make out several words which lead me to believe that if I go down to the dock to claim my goods I make myself liable to life-imprisonment and the amputation of one leg. This may be wrong, but that's the way I translate it. I am not so sure about its being a leg that I am to have amputated, and I am not so sure that, if it is a leg, I am to have it

amputated, but it sounds like that. Now I am not going down to any dock just for a bbl. of dishes and run into anything like that. And I am certain about the other phrase being "life-imprisonment." That is enough in itself.

The word "*fret*" keeps occurring in practically every sentence, and, while I am not silly enough to think that it really means what the English word "fret" means, it has an ugly sound nevertheless. According to this document, my *fret* has to be examined and, if it doesn't suit the *fret*-examiners, the *Tribune de Commerce de Marseille* will meet in a body and decide what to do with it. As I make it out they can take my *fret* and either (a) burn it (b) drown it or (c) eat it themselves. This is going to make it very awkward for me, not even knowing what my *fret* is. Furthermore, I can't be running over to Marseilles and back every few days just to answer questions for their old *Tribune de Commerce.* If they want to examine my *fret*,

they can come over here and do it. I am a busy man.

There seem to be other clauses in my bill-of-lading which would indicate that I would just be a fool to go anywhere near the freight dock after those dishes. Under the head of *Litiges*, which ought to mean something about litigation, I find that a lot of talk is made about an item called "*avaries*." In case there happens to be an *avarie* in your *fret* you are in for all kinds of trouble and may possibly have to live on the second floor of the Custom House all the rest of your life. At least, that is what the French would seem to say.

Now I don't know what *avaries* are, but it looks to me as if they were either misers or bird-houses. By a process of elimination we may decide that there probably wouldn't be any misers in a shipment of goods from Southern France, not because there aren't any misers in Southern France but because they most likely could not be induced to get into a crate for such a long trip. So we may safely

say that *avaries* are not misers. (It would be just the way things work out now for me to get down to the dock and find a whole bunch of misers hidden in among my dishes.) But it is much more likely that *avaries* are bird-houses, with birds in them. And if anyone is so unfortunate as to have a bird-house discovered in his bill of goods, he is, according to this paper, as good as in chains right there.

I have no reason to suppose that the old man in Biotte slipped any bird-houses in my pottery when he was packing it, but how am I to know? He was a pretty nasty old man and didn't like me at all. I remember now that when I asked him if the tea-cups were to hang in the window with ferns in them, he gave me a very dirty look and I thought at the time, "If there is anything that Grandpa can do to make things hard for you, he is going to do it." Now what would be simpler than for him to have put a bird-house right in with that big soup-tureen, knowing very well that it would cause me trouble? All French potters who use marine freight at all

must know this orange-colored sheet backward and must know that anyone caught with a bird-house (*or* miser) in his shipment is going to be subjected to all the indignities which the *Code de Procédure Civile* can think up. He could have fitted the bird-house with a set of love-birds or parrakeets which would be very noisy and call attention to themselves the minute the *fret*-investigators came anywhere near them. He might even have put in a parrot which would scream out, "Look, look! Here I am!" or "*Avarie*! *avarie*!" He could have done *anything*, and the more I think about the way he looked at me the more I think that he probably did.

So I think that I will just tuck the orange sheet and the notice from the freight office in the back of my drawer and forget about them. The men on the dock can probably find some use for my dishes, although I doubt if they would like them so blue. We really have enough dishes at home already and another set would not be worth all the penalties that I would be liable to by claiming them. I have

several more years left before I have to start walking with a cane, and I don't want to spend them on the second floor of the Marseilles Custom House or languishing in a French jail.

Just for curiosity's sake, however, I must look up and see whether *avaries* are misers or bird-houses.

A DARK HORSE IN BRITISH SPORTS

I HAD just about decided that I was getting too old for athletic sports, what with my left knee bending backward just as easily as it does forward and my face getting purple when I so much as lift an arm, but now everything is different. I am going in training again. And it is the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland which has done this for me.

The T. A. of G. B. and I. has sent me a pamphlet called "Calendar of Historic and

Important Events of the year," and it is full of the peachiest things. A lot of them are aimed at the indoor trade, such as the Carnation Show on November twenty-sixth in the Royal Horticultural Hall (I'm afraid I can't make the Carnation Show and I am simply sick about it) or the Scottish Home Life Exhibition (whee-e-e!) at Edinburgh in April. These things which are held in halls are too sedentary. I must be up and about.

For me, there seem to be countless forms of healthful exercise available in the British Isles this year. In September there will be "tossing the caber" at the Braemar Highland Gathering; on April twenty-second there will be "street football" at Workington, Cumberland, "played through the streets of the town with hundreds of players on each side"; in June there will be the Uphellya at Lerwick, Shetland, and on Shrove Tuesday, Westminster School will indulge in its rite of "tossing the pancake."

As Shrove Tuesday is nearest at hand, let

us get down to training for "tossing the pancake" first. I am taking it for granted that "tossing the pancake" corresponds to our American "snapping the cookies," and, if it does, I am in pretty good training right now. A little more control in the matter of direction, and I am set for the contest at Westminster. I may not be quite so young as the boys who go to school there, but I have given my system some pretty tough treatment in the past ten years and there ought to be no difficulty in keeping up with the sickliest of them. I held the transatlantic cookie-putting (or snapping) cup for 1928 and lost it in 1929 only to a man who had a complication of other troubles, which more or less rendered him a professional. For an amateur, otherwise in good health (which ought to be a specification in any cookie-snapping, or pancake-tossing competition), I have every confidence that I can hold my own against the field. The only part about this Westminster meeting that I don't like is its coming on Shrove Tues-

day. I usually have other things to do on Shrove Tuesday.

I would know more how to train for the Lerwick "Uphellya" if I knew what they did there. It sounds a little unpleasant. I rather imagine that some fighting goes on and maybe a little preliminary drinking. I might enter my name for the preliminary drinking and then see how I liked the rest of it. After the preliminary drinking, however, I probably would like—and enter—anything. That might be bad, as there are a lot of things which I really shouldn't enter. I don't know much about the residents of Lerwick, or what they are likely to do at an "Uphellya," but so long as it doesn't involve running more than ten yards or vaulting, I guess that I can keep up. I never could vault, even in my heyday (1846-1847), owing to a third leg which always seemed to appear just as I was about to clear the bar and drag about three inches too low. I never could find that leg after the vaulting was over, and it is some-

I WOULD FEEL THAT SOONER OR LATER HE WOULD TURN INTO A FAIRY PRINCE AND WHISK ME OFF TO THE MOON.

thing I would rather not talk about, if you don't mind.

Of course, taking place on the island of Shetland, the whole thing may be done on ponies, which wouldn't be so good. I know that it sounds silly, but I have always been just a little afraid of Shetland ponies. No horse would be so small as that unless he had something up his sleeve to make up for it. It isn't natural for a horse to be so small. I wouldn't get on one for $1,000,000 (well anyway, for $5) because I would always feel that, sooner or later, he would grow big on me or turn into a fairy prince and whisk me off to the moon. Perhaps I haven't communicated to you my feeling about Shetland ponies, but it is a pretty subtle one, and if you haven't already got it for yourself, I could talk all night without making you understand. When I have said that, for grown-up horses, they are *too small*, I have said everything. And if the Shetland "Uphellya" is held on Shetland ponies, they can scratch me.

The "street football" in Workington, Cumberland, with hundreds of players on each side rushing through the streets of the town, sounds pretty uninteresting. I don't think that I shall even enter that. It is the sort of thing which sounds like a lot of fun when you are planning it, but which works out to be a terrible flop. In the first place, the streets of Workington can't be very wide, as none of the streets is wide in an English town. This means that only about five or six men can possibly be in line from one wall to another. In other words, there are going to be about 192 players on each side who have nothing to do but giggle and push each other about. This is going to be not only dull but bad for the morale. Before the game has been on for fifteen minutes those who are unwilling non-participants are going to get tired of pushing each other about and are going to slide into the nearest pub and wait for the thing to be over. Pretty soon those in the front line are going to realize what fools they are making

of themselves by kicking a football around when they might be with their teammates in a nice warm pub, and they are going to stop, too. This will leave just the football rolling by itself in the streets and all the women and visitors sitting up in windows, wondering where the two teams are. My suggestion would be that they save time by getting the two teams in the pub right at the start, and letting the women and visitors kick the ball about. My interest in it is purely academic, however, as I shall not be there.

The last event for which I have to train is the one held at the Braemar Highland Gathering in September, "tossing the caber." I have asked several sporting goods dealers if they have a caber and they have told me that they are all out. There seems to be a big run on cabers this season. As I remember it, a caber is either a pole about the size of a flagstaff or a small animal like an anteater. In either case, I would not be particularly crazy about tossing it. I seem to have seen pictures of men in

kilts hoisting a great pole into the air, but never any pictures of its landing; so I don't know whether you actually throw it or just stand there and hold it up until somebody comes along and tells you to drop it. Hoisting the pole might be all right, but I would rather not wear the kilts, if it is all the same to the committee. I once wore kilts to a fancy dress party and I am still blushing over what happened.

I rather think that my best event will be tossing the pancake at Westminster School on Shrove Tuesday. I am not making a book on it, and I don't want to lead any of my friends into betting, but I will say this much: if you have a little cash that you want to invest and will take a fifteen to one bet (I am a dark horse in Westminster and the favorite, I understand, is a boy with a very weak stomach who won last year) you could do worse than to send your money to "Duggie," the London bookmaker who advertises on the back pages of the London weeklies, with instructions for him to do what he thinks best,

but, if possible, to slip it in very quietly on "Daisy Bob" (my stable name).

At any rate, I shall be back in athletic circles again and getting exercise. I can never thank the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland enough.

A VANISHING ART

SOMEHOW I have a feeling that, no matter how far out of work I may be, I shall never be able to make my living by putting little ships into glass bottles. There must be some people who do, for one is constantly seeing bottled ships in store windows. I never could quite figure out just what kind of store it was that would feature a ship in a bottle as a window display, but as there is usually an 18th century highboy and a pair of bellows alongside the bottle, it can't be one of the more essential emporia. I guess that you would just call it a "ship in bottle store."

However, the fact that putting little ships into bottles is not a useful trade is not the reason why I would not go in for it. Look at what I am doing now! No, the reason for my eschewing that form of gainful activity is simply that I haven't the slightest idea

how it is done. And I doubt if I ever could learn.

I have often tried to figure it out while standing, on a busy day in my own trade, in front of a ship in bottle store. Is it possible that the tiny ship is made and rigged and set up and then the glass blown around it? Blowing glass in itself is enough of a mystery to me without having it complicated by having to blow it around a ship. I rather doubt if that is the way the thing is done.

The only other solution is that the bottle is already blown and the ship is made inside the bottle. This, too, sounds implausible. Some sort of man or woman (or very dexterous child) has got to make the ship, and you can't tell me that any one, no matter how small, can get right inside one of those bottles and build a ship. I may get a funny, vacant look in my eyes once in a while, and I may not be very good at adding up my check stubs, but I'm no fool. Nobody makes those ships from the inside out.

This leaves what? Nothing! Either the ship

is made first or the bottle is made first. The hole in the neck of the bottle is not large enough to allow for a full rigged ship being let down through it. You can tell that at a glance. There is nothing left except for the ponderer to go crazy. I have tried that, too.

I once tracked a ship in bottle putter to his workshop and tried to find out how he worked it. I was spending the summer on the Atlantic coast (sometimes here and sometimes there, mostly a compromise between the two) and in an old Cape Cod antique shop I saw one of the accursed things. I went into the shop and asked the old lady (don't let her know I called her an "old lady," please) who had made it. She, with that old New England cordiality which has made that section of the country the flourishing centre it now is, left the room without answering me. But I found out from a customer (a summer resident who came from Wisconsin) that a gentleman who lived in the white house down by the steamship dock had wrought this wonder. So I set out in search of him.

His name was Capt. Whipple and he was 167 years old, although he lied about his age and claimed to be only 160.

"Cap'n," I said (from now on I shall spell the title "Captain," but you must remember that what I really said was "Cap'n"), "Captain, how in (naming a certain flower) do you put those little ships into those bottles?" A fair question, and deserving of a fair answer.

The captain whittled a piece from his callused thumb and spat reflectively. "Wal," he said (from now on I shall spell the words as they should be spelled, without reference to the Cape Cod pronunciation), "Well, it's a long story."

Going back to my hotel and getting a chair, I drew it up beside the old gentleman, all attention.

"Shoot, kid!" I said.

The seafaring man took the stub of a pencil and began figuring on the back of the original of a letter from Thomas Jefferson to Martha Custis (a little scandal which has

never come to light, but which, while it lasted, was a peach). Then he looked up at me with his little, watery blue eyes aglint.

"You're from New York, ain't you?" he asked.

I blushed prettily.

"It will cost you just $500 to know," he said. "And, at that, I am cheating myself."

I thought it over. Five hundred dollars to learn how to put a ship in a bottle, when the chances were that I never would be called upon to put anything into a bottle, much less a ship. And even if, at some time or other, I should be faced with the necessity, I could always plead a headache or the fact that I had no ship with me at the moment. So I took an old revolutionary cradle which was standing nearby and placed it firmly over the old gentleman's head until nothing was visible of him above his shoulders. On this I piled several pewter candlesticks, a spinning wheel, and a portrait of Gen. Howe. This done, I left the ancient mariner and artisan with his secret.

The main trouble, however, with taking up ship in bottle putting as a trade (aside from the difficulty of finding out how it is done) would seem to be that it doesn't offer much opportunity for advancement to a young man. You can't get ahead very fast. Suppose you do learn how to do it and serve an apprenticeship to some expert ship in bottle putter for five years. You are then promoted to head of the bottling department. What is there left? You are as far as you can go, unless you start in for yourself. And I should imagine that the consumer demand for ships in bottles would be soon exhausted in any one community, with very little turnover.

One is reminded (and, let us be quite frank about it, when I say "one is reminded" I mean "I am reminded")* of the business troubles of the man who polished the commemorative brass cannon in Ypsilanti, Mich. (I have always heard that it was Ypsilanti, Mich., but I am willing to retract if it is not

* The author is indebted to Mr. "Terry" McGovern of Cornell University for the following business fable.

true.) It seems that the residents of Ypsilanti, Mich., shortly after the Civil War decided that some sort of monument or *denkmal* should be placed in a public square to remind future generations of Michigan's part in the great struggle. So a large brass commemorative cannon was placed on the common (if there is a common in Ypsilanti) and a veteran of the war was engaged, at a nominal salary, to keep this cannon in good condition. He was to polish it twice a week and see that small boys did not hide in it. Aside from this, his time was his own.

This business routine went on for 25 years. The veteran was faithful at his task of polishing the commemorative brass cannon and its splendor and shining surface were the admiration of every one who visited Ypsilanti, Mich., during those 25 years, to say nothing of the natives. "The commemorative brass cannon of Ypsilanti, Mich.," became a byword throughout the state for expressing how shiny a commemorative brass cannon could be made.

One evening, during the veteran's 26th year of service, he came home to supper at his usual hour (4:30), but his wife noticed that he was more depressed than was his wont. He hardly touched his food, and sat in moody contemplation of the backs of his polish-stained hands. His wife was worried.

"What is it, Joe?" she asked. "What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, my dear," said her husband, and turned in a brave attempt to finish his cutlet.

"Come, come," said the companion of his 25 years of labor (he had married immediately on getting the job of polishing the commemorative brass cannon), "I know that something is wrong. You are depressed."

The gray-haired man put down his knife and looked his wife in the eye.

"You're right," he said, as he took her hand in his. "I am depressed. Things haven't been going very well down at the cannon lately."

"You don't mean that you're fired, Joe!" she said, fearfully.

"No, no! Never fear about that," was his reply. "They couldn't fire me. I know too much. They would be afraid that I might make trouble. But I am discouraged about my work. I don't seem to be getting ahead. For 25 years I have been polishing that cannon and putting everything that I had into making it bright and shiny. I have done my job well—no one can deny that. But recently I have got to thinking. What is it leading to? Where am I getting? Where is the future in polishing commemorative brass cannons?" And the old man broke down and cried.

His wife was silent for a minute. Then she stroked his head and said: "I know, Joe. I have worried a little myself. And I have figured it out this way. In the last 25 years we have saved a little money. I have put aside a dollar here and a dollar there when you didn't know about it. We have quite a tidy little nest egg in the bank now, and here is

my suggestion: Let's take that money, buy a cannon, and go into business for ourselves!"

Such, I should think, would be the problem which would confront every middle-aged man who finds himself, at the age of 55, a putter in bottles of little ships. What is the future of such work? Even if he goes into business for himself like the polisher of the commemorative brass cannon of Ypsilanti, Mich., how can he meet competition? Of course he can vary the types of ship he puts into the bottles. The old, square-rigged merchantman having gone out of date, he could put in models of the *Bremen* or destroyers, but, with all this talk of naval reduction going on, dealing in battleships and destroyers is a pretty precarious business.

England pleads that her navy has been more than an engine of war during the last two centuries, that it has been a career for the finest of her young men. She naturally recoils from any proposition which would eliminate such patrician employment. But what about those unfortunates who find them-

selves with no models for bottle putting? These artisans must either stick to the old clipper ships which their grandfathers put in bottles, or put in battleships which may be, in a few years, against the law. Of course, they could begin putting in models of reapers and binders, or of printing presses, or any of the other thousand and two engines of peace, but that really wouldn't be right. It has got to be a ship if the old tradition is to be maintained.

And so, to all young men who are going out into the world to make their living, I would say: "Think twice before you go in for putting little ships in bottles. That is, unless you are planning to spend a lot of your time in jail, where time hangs heavy."

I suppose that I shall get a lot of indignant letters from the trade for issuing this advice. But it comes from the heart.

THE TREASURER'S REPORT

AUTHOR'S NOTE

ABOUT eight years ago (eight, to be exact) I was made a member of a committee to plan a little Sunday night entertainment for some newspapermen who wanted to act. The committee was supposed to meet at a certain time, each member with some suggestions for sketches or song-numbers. (In order to get out of this morass of pussy-footing which I have got myself into, I will come right out and say that the "certain time" at which the committee was to meet was 8 P.M. on Sunday night.) At 7:15 P.M. I suddenly realized that I had no suggestions to offer for the entertainment.

As all the other members of the committee were conscientious workers, I felt considerably abashed. But as they were also charming

and indulgent fellows, I knew that they would take my dereliction in good part if I could only take their minds off the business of the meeting and possibly put them in good humor with a comical story or a card-trick. So, on the way up in the taxi, I decided to make believe, when they called on me for my contribution, that I had misunderstood the purpose of the committee-meeting and had come prepared to account for the year's expenditures. These I jotted down on the back of an old shirt.

As is always the case with such elaborate trickery, my plan to escape censure by diverting the minds of the committee fell flat. They listened to my temporizing report and voted me a droll chap, but then they said: "And now what are your suggestions for the entertainment?". As I had to confess that I had none, it was agreed that, *faute de mieux*, I should elaborate the report I had just offered and perhaps acquire some skill in its delivery, and give that as my share of the Sunday night

entertainment. At this moment my entire life changed its course.

I guess that no one ever got so sick of a thing as I, and all my friends, have grown of this Treasurer's Report. I did it every night and two matinees a week for nine months in the Third Music Box Revue. Following that, I did it for ten weeks in vaudeville around the country, I did it at banquets and teas, at friends' houses and in my own house, and finally went to Hollywood and made a talking movie of it. In fact, I have inflicted it on the public in every conceivable way except over the radio and dropping it from airplanes. But I have never written it. I have been able to throw myself into a sort of trance while delivering it, so that the horrible monotony of the thing made no impression on my nerve cells, but to sit down and put the threadbare words on paper has always seemed just a little too much to bear.

I am writing it out now more as a release than anything else. Perhaps, in accordance with Freudian theories, if I rid myself of this

thing which has been skulking in the back of my mind for eight years, I shall be a normal man again. No one has to read it. I hope that no one does, for it doesn't read at all well. All I want to do is get it on paper and out of the way. I feel better already, just from having told all this. And please let's never bring the matter up again.

* * *

The report is delivered by an Assistant Treasurer who has been called in to pinch-hit for the regular Treasurer who is ill. He is not a very good public-speaker, this assistant, but after a few minutes of confusion is caught up by the spell of his own oratory and is hard to stop.

I shall take but a very few moments of your time this evening, for I realize that you would much rather be listening to this interesting entertainment than to a dry financial statement . . . but I *am* reminded of a story —which you have probably all of you heard.

It seems that there were these two Irishmen walking down the street when they came to a—oh, I should have said in the first place that the parrot which was hanging out in *front* of the store—or rather belonging to one of these two fellows—the *first* Irishman, that is—was—well, *any*way, this parrot ——

(After a slight cogitation, he realizes that, for all practical purposes, the story is as good as lost; so he abandons it entirely and, stepping forward, drops his facile, story-telling manner and assumes a quite spurious business-like air.)

Now, in connection with reading this report, there are one or two points which Dr. Murnie wanted brought up in connection with it, and he has asked me to bring them up in connec—to bring them up.

In the first place, there is the question of the work which we are trying to do up there at our little place at Silver Lake, a work which we feel not only fills a very definite need in the community but also fills a very

definite need—er—in the community. I don't think that many members of the Society realize just how big the work is that we are trying to do up there. For instance, I don't think that it is generally known that most of our boys are between the age of fourteen. We feel that, by taking the boy at this age, we can get closer to his real nature—for a boy *has* a very real nature, you may be sure—and bring him into closer touch not only with the school, the parents, and with each other, but also with the town in which they live, the country to whose flag they pay allegiance, and to the—ah—(*trailing off*) town in which they live.

Now the fourth point which Dr. Murnie wanted brought up was that in connection with the installation of the new furnace last Fall. There seems to have been considerable talk going around about this not having been done quite as economically as it might—have—been—done, when, as a matter of fact, the whole thing *was* done just as economically as possible—in fact, even *more* so. I have

here a report of the Furnace Committee, showing just how the whole thing was handled from start to finish.

(Reads from report, with considerable initial difficulty with the stiff covers.)

Bids were submitted by the following firms of furnace contractors, with a clause stating that if we did not engage a firm to do the work for us we should pay them nothing for submitting the bids. This clause alone saved us a great deal of money.

The following firms, then, submitted bids:

Merkle, Wybigant Co., the Eureka Dust Bin and Shaker Co., The Elite Furnace Shop, and Harris, Birnbauer and Harris. The bid of Merkle, Wybigant being the lowest, Harris Birnbauer were selected to do the job.

(Here a page is evidently missing from the report, and a hurried search is carried on through all the pages, without result.)

Well, that pretty well clears up that end of the work.

Those of you who contributed so generously last year to the floating hospital have probably wondered what became of the money. I was speaking on this subject only last week at our up-town branch, and, after the meeting, a dear little old lady, dressed all in lavendar, came up on the platform, and, laying her hand on my arm, said: "Mr. So-and-so (calling me by name) Mr. So-and-so, what the hell did you do with all the money we gave you last year?" Well, I just laughed and pushed her off the platform, but it has occurred to the committee that perhaps some of you, like that little old lady, would be interested in knowing the disposition of the funds.

Now, Mr. Rossiter, unfortunately our treasurer—or rather Mr. Rossiter our *treasurer, unfortunately* is confined at his home tonight with a bad head-cold and I have been asked (*he hears someone whispering at him from the wings, but decides to ignore it*) and I have been asked if I would (*the whisperer will not be denied, so he goes over to the en-*

trance and receives a brief message, returning beaming and laughing to himself). Well, the joke seems to be on *me*! Mr. Rossiter has *pneumonia*!

Following, then, is a summary of the Treasurer's Report:

(Reads, in a very businesslike manner).

During the year 1929—and by that is meant 1928—the Choral Society received the following in donations:

B. L. G.	$500
G. K. M.	500
Lottie and Nellie W ——	500
In memory of a happy summer at Rye Beach	10
Proceeds of a sale of coats and hats left in the boat-house....	14.55
And then the Junior League gave a performance of "Pinafore" for the benefit of the Fund which, unfortunately, resulted in a deficit of	$300
Then, from dues and charges...	2,354.75

And, following the installation of the new furnace, a saving in coal amounting to $374.75 —which made Dr. Murnie very happy, you may be sure.

Making a total of receipts amounting to $3,645.75

This is all, of course, reckoned as of June.

In the matter of expenditures, the Club has not been so fortunate. There was the unsettled condition of business, and the late Spring, to contend with, resulting in the following—er—rather discouraging figures, I am afraid.

Expenditures	$23,574.85
Then there was a loss, owing to— several things—of.....	3,326.70
Car-fare	4,452.25

And then, Mrs. Rawlins' expense account, when she went down to see the work they are doing in Baltimore, came to $256.50,

but I am sure that you will all agree that it was worth it to find out—er—what they are doing in Baltimore.

And then, under the general head of Odds and Ends 2,537.50

Making a total disbursement of .... (*hurriedly*) $416,546.75

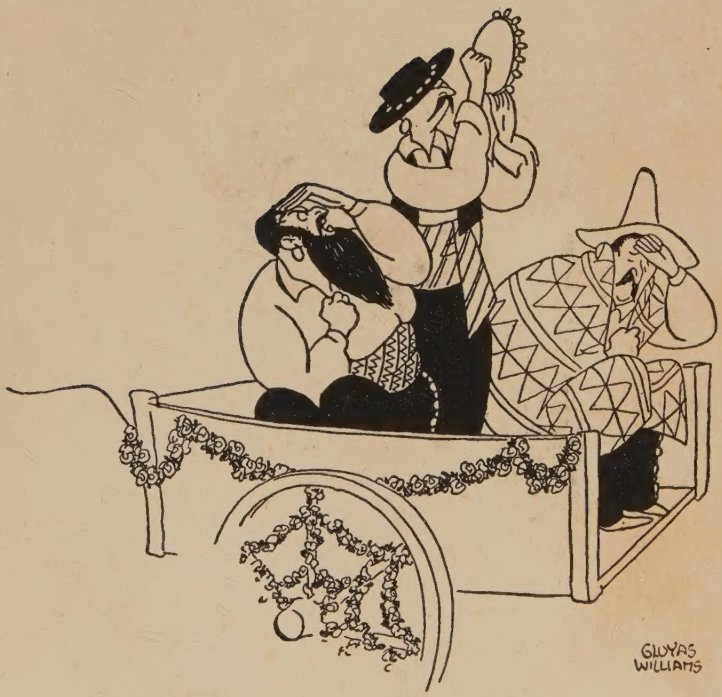
or a net deficit of—ah—several thousand dollars.

Now, these figures bring us down only to October. In October my sister was married, and the house was all torn up, and in the general confusion we lost track of the figures for May and August. All those wishing the *approximate* figures for May and August, however, may obtain them from me in the vestry after the dinner, where I will be with pledge cards for those of you who wish to subscribe over and above your annual dues, and I hope that each and every one of you here tonight will look deep into his heart and (*archly*) into his pocketbook, and see if he

can not find it there to help us to put this thing over with a bang (*accompanied by a wholly ineffectual gesture representing a bang*) and to help and make this just the biggest and best year the Armenians have ever had . . . . . I thank you.

(Exits, bumping into proscenium)

THE TREASURER'S REPORT
is set in Intertype Garamond
type, a version of the type
known at the *Imprimerie
Nationale, Paris,* as *Caractères de l'Université.* Format
by A. W. Rushmore. Manufactured by the Haddon
Craftsmen for the publishers,
HARPER & BROTHERS
NEW YORK & LONDON
1930


GLUYAS
WILLIAMS

GLYAS
WILLIAMS